

Contingency and Adverse Effects Policy

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline how we will minimise the disruption to CIPFA assessment delivery as well as to safeguard the interests of students.

In the event of major disruption to systems caused by widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather or power failures CIPFA will seek advice on recommended courses of action from official external agencies such as the police, Environment Agency or Health Protection Agency and further details of which are found within our CIPFA Business Continuity Plan.

CIPFA will take steps to minimise the occurrence or likelihood of an occurrence which could have an Adverse Effect and mitigate it should it occur. As necessary we will submit an Event Notification to Ofqual in cases where the occurrence will directly affect the delivery and assessment of our qualifications and qualification standards.

Scope

This document is intended as information for a wide range of stakeholders. For the purpose of this document, stakeholders include internal CIPFA staff, students, assessors, training centre staff, awarding organisation staff and assessment invigilators.

Please note that training centre staff in these scenarios refer to members of staff who are administering assessments.

Priorities

The priority for CIPFA when implementing contingencies will be to maintain these principles:

- Delivering assessments to published timetables
- Delivering results to published timetables
- Complying with regulatory requirements in relation to assessment, marking and standards
- Maintaining business as usual in the event of circumstances beyond our control
- Mitigating any adverse effects on students
- Maintaining qualification and apprenticeship standards.

If the usual CIPFA contingencies are no longer sufficient to maintain these outcomes, an identified Crisis Management Team consisting of representatives of all organisations involved will be convened by Ofqual to agree the additional actions required.

National disruption

In the event of a widespread national disruption to the taking of assessments CIPFA will:

- Follow the CIPFA Business Continuity Plan
- Inform the affected stakeholders by email and/or telephone, as appropriate but within 24 hours of the incident
- Following identification of the incident caused and the contingency measures being implemented, CIPFA will document agreed actions and deadlines within five working days of incident

- Conduct a review of the outcomes of any actions taken, note lessons learned and the implications for any other policies and processes
- Communicate with stakeholders our plan going forward should the incident be longer-term and sustained over a period of months.

Definition of widespread national disruption

- National security threat
- Criminal or terrorist activity
- Widespread illness
- Extreme weather conditions
- The effects of a disaster in the local community

Severity

Depending on the severity of a crisis CIPFA will convene to decide the most appropriate action related to assessment continuation.

This may include:

- Rescheduling the assessment for another date
- Delaying the assessment
- Adapting the assessment

However, any action taken by CIPFA will follow the guidelines and regulation published by Ofqual and the Government at the time.

The link to regulatory conditions under the Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (ERF) and the Extended ERF relating to contingency during the Covid pandemic can be found below and these are subject to regular updates.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/extraordinary-regulatory-framework-vtq-covid-19-conditions-and-requirements>

Adverse effects standing item

During day-to-day operations of the organisation there will be issues to discuss regarding CIPFA assessment administrative procedures, student Appeals, Special Consideration, Complaints and Malpractice and Maladministration. To support this Contingency Policy and process, and to reduce the occurrence of Adverse Effects, CIPFA will operate a standing agenda item to discuss potential impacts with relevant Assessment Managers and the Quality and Compliance Manager. During the standing item matters will be discussed that may require immediate consideration and decision-making and ultimately may need escalation and reporting.

Process

The Panel review the respective log entries to identify any potential adverse effect that require escalation and reporting. They will agree the course of action through collective agreement and decide on whether there is a need for communication of an Adverse Effect to Ofqual.

Each entry is risk rated and actions agreed collectively by the Panel. This includes consideration of any external or internal impact and the communication required.

The Panel will seek to ensure that CIPFA will consider whether an event:

- poses a potential risk of occurring
- increases CIPFA's risk level
- affects students directly
- affects the assessment – process or outcome

Potential Adverse Effects caused internally or externally:

1. Error in CIPFA assessment materials
2. Failure of IT systems used for online assessment
3. Loss or theft of, or breach of confidentiality in assessment materials
4. Inability to supply assessment materials for a scheduled date
5. Failure in the delivery of an assessment which threatens Assessors capacity to differentiate accurately and consistently across levels of attainment
6. Unable to meet a published date for the issue of results and certificates
7. CIPFA have issued incorrect results or certificates
8. Evidence of malpractice resulting in termination of Exam Centre approval
9. Major disruption to assessment conditions at the time of an exam
10. Students unable to sit for examinations at the scheduled assessment centre due to exceptional circumstances
11. Belief that there has been an incident of malpractice or maladministration, which could invalidate the award of a qualification which it makes available
12. CIPFA have increased costs significantly above the rate of inflation
13. CIPFA are named as a party in a criminal or civil proceeding or subjected to a regulatory investigation or sanction by any professional, regulatory or government body
14. A Senior Officer is party to criminal proceedings or disqualification as a company director

This list is not exhaustive.

Reference and acknowledgement

This Contingency Policy has been prepared based on our responsibilities for regulation during normal business activity as an Awarding Organisation but also with reference to guidance from the Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, published April 2019 and the Covid specific Ofqual Extraordinary Regulatory Framework (ERF) and the Extended ERF Please refer to Appendix 1 and 2.

Centre Responsibilities

CIPFA will expect all delivery and exam centres to have in place a robust Contingency Policy and plan, this will be subject to validation at any time whether during a quality visit or remote audit.

All centres **must** have an examination contingency plan/examinations policy on file for inspection.

The examination contingency plan/examinations policy should cover all aspects of examination administration. It will allow senior leaders to implement a robust contingency plan, minimising risk to examination administration and any adverse impact on students, should the Head of centre, relevant senior leader(s), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process be absent at a critical stage of the assessment cycle.

The Joint contingency plan for the examinations system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, can be downloaded from Gov.UK website,
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

It provides a framework for senior leaders to build and shape a plan or policy in light of their local circumstances.

This document is also available as Appendix 1 at the end of this document.

Policy version and owner

Policy owner	Head of Qualifications and Membership
Version	1.0
Update	March 2020 SMB
Approval	SMB 04 March 2021
Policy review date	March 2021

Regulatory references

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition A6: Identification and management of risks
Condition A7: Management of incidents

Appendix 1

Information for ATPs and students

Guidance

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 (updated 18 September)

[Action for FE Colleges](#) from the Department for Education in England (updated 18 September)

[Public health guidance to support autumn exams](#) from the Department for Education (published 29 September)

[Education and childcare: coronavirus](#) from Welsh Government

[Covid-19 - guidance for school and educational settings](#) from Department of Education in Northern Ireland (published 29 September)

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

[Exceptional closure days](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland

[Checklist - exceptional closure of schools](#) from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland

[School closures](#) from NI Direct

[Opening schools in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government

[Procedures for handling bomb threats](#) from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office.

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](#)

Steps you should take

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.

In the event of disruption

Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.

Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.

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 questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.

Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.

In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's [Centre emergency evacuation procedure](#).

Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

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.

Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.

Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.

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.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

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.

In the event of disruption

Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.

Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.

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).

Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.

Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

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.

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](#)

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.

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.

We will update this page as necessary should national disruption occur with any further relevant links.

Appendix 2

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Scenarios

Below are specific scenarios set out in the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland where contingency plans would be invoked.

The scenarios set out the way in which an examination would be planned and delivered, from issuing scripts to offering post results services.

Each scenario sets out the following information:

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Recommended actions

Further guidance

1. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an assessment – centres are closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

centres are closed or students are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study supported time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning.

Recommended actions:

Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for assessments.

In the case of modular courses, centres may advise students to sit examinations in an alternative series.

Centres should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning.

Guidance on emergency planning, with advice on severe weather is available here:

[Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#)

2. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

disruption to the distribution of examination papers to centres in advance of examinations.

Recommended actions:

awarding organisations to source alternative couriers for delivery of hardcopies

awarding organisations to change the timing of the distribution to earlier or later than originally scheduled

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.

Students unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centres remain open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

students are unable to attend examination centres to take examinations as normal.

Recommended actions:

centres to invoke centre contingency plan. This must focus **on options that enable students to take their examinations.**

Information on what schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted can be found here:

[Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#)

Awarding organisations will ensure that any applications for special considerations as a result of disruption will be reviewed across awarding organisations to ensure consistency of decision making.

4. Centres are unable to open as normal during the examination period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

centres unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations.

Recommended actions:

centres to invoke centre contingency plan, **which must focus on options that enable students to take their examinations.** As part of their general planning for emergencies, centres should cover the impact on examinations. The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre. The head is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether their centres is able to open.

Information on what schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted can be found here:

[Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#)

Awarding organisations will ensure that any applications for special considerations as a result of disruption will be reviewed across awarding organisations to ensure consistency of decision making

5. Disruption to transporting completed examination papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Recommended actions:

where examinations are part of the national ‘yellow label’ service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

for any examinations where centres make their own arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.

centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection.

6. 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

Recommended actions:

awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations students may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.

7. Disruption to the scanning process – where completed examination papers are being scanned in preparation for on- screen marking

Criteria for implementation of plan:

scanning process disrupted beyond acceptable levels resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates.

Recommended actions:

awarding organisations to implement their existing contingency plans for disruption to on-screen marking process

awarding organisations to revert to alternatives form of marking

prioritisation of scanning to be based on results dates.

8. Markers unable to mark examination papers according to marking schedules

Criteria for implementation of plan:

markers are unable to mark examination papers resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates.

Recommended actions:

awarding organisations to re-allocate scripts to available markers

awarding organisations to recruit, train or re-standardise qualified additional markers

awarding organisations to consider the proportion of marking required to be completed for grade boundary setting

prioritisation of marking to be based on results dates.

9. Difficulty in meeting results schedule

Criteria for implementation of plan:

significant inability to meet schedule for publication of results.

Recommended actions:

awarding organisations must notify the regulators of any such instance

awarding organisations to establish priorities for results processing

awarding organisations to implement existing contingency plans for disruption to the results processing schedule
awarding organisations to assess level of disruption and consider options for issuing results in alternative format(s)
awarding organisations and regulators liaise with relevant organisations regarding process of candidate progression to further and higher education.

10. Awarding organisations unable to issue results as planned

Criteria for implementation of plan:

awarding organisations unable to distribute electronic results due to failure of systems facilitating results delivery
awarding organisations unable to distribute hard copy results

Recommended actions:

Where results are due to be issued electronically:

awarding organisations to implement existing contingency plans for disruption to the issuing of results
awarding organisations transmit results via alternative electronic formats
awarding organisations issue hardcopy results.

Where results are due to be issued in hardcopy:

awarding organisations to facilitate communication of results via secure web-based platforms.

11. Centres are unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

Criteria for implementation of plan:

centres are unable to access or manage the distribution of results to students, or to facilitate post results services.

Recommended actions:

Distribution of results:

centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
centres to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site
centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.

Facilitation of post results services:

centre to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location
centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible
awarding organisations to review the post results deadlines.

Summary of responsibilities in the event of disruption to examinations

- JCQ is responsible for coordinating across awarding organisations, including convening the crisis management team
- Regulators (Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA Accreditation in Northern Ireland) are responsible for sharing timely and accurate information, as required with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

Awarding organisations are responsible for:	Examination centres are responsible for:
	Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of centres' general emergency planning
Ensuring centres receive examination materials for scheduled examinations	Preparing students for examinations
	Ensuring examinations and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations
	Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work are stored under secure conditions
	Deciding whether the centre can open for examinations as scheduled and informing relevant awarding organisations if the centre is unable to open
Advising centres on possible alternative examination arrangements and declining/approving proposals for alternative examination arrangements	Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the centre cannot open for examinations and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding organisations
Evaluating and declining/approving requests for special consideration	Judging whether students meet the requirements for special consideration as a result of any disruption and submitting these requests to the relevant awarding organisations
	Assessing and liaising with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of papers
Marking, moderating and grading candidate work	
Issuing results to centres on scheduled dates	The distribution of examination results to students

Useful documents

Ofqual three-country guidance on what schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted
JCQ access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special consideration
JCQ instructions for conducting examinations