

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, Accredited Training Provider (ATP) staff, awarding organisation staff and assessment invigilators.

This document is intended for a wide range of stakeholders, including CIPFA staff, students, assessors, Accredited Training Provider (ATP) staff, awarding organisation staff and assessment invigilators.

In this context, ATP staff refers to those delivering Courses of Theoretical Instruction (COTI) or assessment.

Priorities

CIPFA's contingency priorities are to:

- Deliver assessments to published timetables
- Deliver results to published timetables
- Comply with regulatory requirements
- Maintain business as usual
- Minimise adverse effects on students
- Maintain qualification and apprenticeship standards

If regular contingencies are insufficient, a Crisis Management Team may be convened by appropriate authorities or coordinating bodies depending on the scale and scope of the disruption.

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.

In a widespread national disruption, CIPFA will:

- Follow the CIPFA Business Continuity Plan
- Inform affected stakeholders within 24 hours
- Document agreed actions and deadlines within 5 working days
- Review the outcomes and lessons learned
- Communicate plans for sustained disruption

Examples of widespread national disruption:

- National security threat
- Criminal or terrorist activity
- Widespread illness
- Extreme weather
- Local disasters

Severity and Response

Depending on the severity of the disruption, CIPFA may:

- Reschedule assessments
- Adapt assessments
- Actions will align with Ofqual and Government guidance.

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 with the Assessment and Compliance Team.

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Matters considered may require immediate escalation and potential reporting to Ofqual.

Process

The Panel will:

- Review log entries for potential adverse effects
- Risk-rate each issue
- Agree and record actions collectively
- Consider any external or internal impact and the communication required
- Escalate to Ofqual if necessary

Examples of internal or external adverse effects:

- Errors in assessment materials
- IT system failure
- Confidentiality breaches
- Inability to deliver or assess as scheduled
- Incorrect results or certificates issued
- Centre malpractice or major disruption
- Legal or reputational risk events
- Criminal investigations or sanctions

(This list is not exhaustive.)

Reference and acknowledgement

This policy aligns with the Joint Contingency Plan (June 2023) and incorporates relevant Government and JCQ guidance.

Summary of Responsibilities

DfE / Education Ministers

- May intervene in significant national events (e.g. COVID) via policy decisions.

Regulators (Ofqual, QW, CCEA)

- Provide accurate, timely communication to stakeholders

JCQ

- May coordinate contingency planning guidance for its member awarding organisations

Awarding Organisations (e.g. CIPFA)

- Develop and maintain contingency plans
- Guide and support centres
- Notify Ofqual of events likely to cause adverse effects
- Ensure regulatory compliance under assessment conditions

ATPs

CIPFA expects all ATPs to have a robust Contingency Policy, subject to audit. Plans should cover all aspects of COTI and assessment administration and allow for continuity if key staff are absent.

- Maintain local contingency plans
- Ensure secure storage and transport of materials
- Decide on centre opening status
- Liaise with awarding organisations for alternate arrangements
- Apply for special consideration if learners are affected
- Return assessment materials securely

See: [GOV.UK Guidance on Exam Disruption](#)

Useful references

JCQ: Access Arrangements and Special Consideration

JCQ: Instructions for Conducting Examinations

DfE: Emergency Planning for Education

Policy version and owner

Policy owner	Head of Qualifications Innovation and Development
Version	1.2
Update	September 2025
Approval	September 2025 SMB
Policy review date	September 2026

Regulatory references

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition A6: Identification and management of risks
Condition A7: Management of incidents
Condition B3: Notification to Ofqual of certain events

Appendix 1 - Information for ATPs and students

General contingency guidance

Emergency planning and response for education, childcare and children's social care settings <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings> from the Department for Education in England

Opening schools in extreme bad weather

[Opening, closing and making changes to schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\).](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather/html)

<https://www.gov.wales/opening-schools-well-childcare-and-play-settings-extreme-bad-weather-and-extreme-hot-weather.html>

Information on latest security guidance and different types of threat from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office <https://www.protectuk.police.uk/about-protectuk>

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:

[Joint Contingency Plan \(jqc.org.uk\)](https://www.jcq.org.uk/joint-contingency-plan)

Steps the ATP should take

Planning

Review contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply.

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/assessment

- 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 [Home | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#) and the <https://gov.wales> 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.