



## Exams Contingency Plan

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2. **Purpose of the Plan**
  - 1.1 This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Belmont 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.
  - 1.2 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.
  - 1.3 This plan also confirms Belmont School is compliant with the JCQ regulation (section 5.3, General Regulations for Approved Centres 2022-2023), and 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.

## 2. Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

### A. Exam 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;*
- *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 the post-results services.*

#### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- To establish a coherent programme of training and support to ensure that anyone needing to cover for the Exams Officer (EO) is familiar with working practices, legislation, procedures and administrative systems associated with the EO role;
- To have two members of the Senior Management Team trained in the correct procedures for the issuing of exam papers whilst maintaining necessary security;
- To have the Deputy Head Academic available in the immediate period leading up to public examinations and during the publication of examination results to mitigate against any unexpected absence by the EO.

#### **B. 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 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

- Exam Officer to retain an overview, and to run regular checks with the SENCo that an appropriate historical paper trail of access arrangement needed is being established;
- Exam Officer to regularly consult with the Academic Deputy Head & SENCo regarding assessments and Form 8s exercising due diligence and efficiency;
- Learning Support Team have clear sight of the important dates and submissions regarding access arrangements at the beginning of each Academic Year;
- Regular meetings between the Exam Officer, Academic Deputy Head, SENCo and Head to understand the full process of access arrangements both in terms of pre-planning and during exam sequences.

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### C. 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*
- *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.*

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### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Belmont has a robust system of absence cover for teaching staff, and comprehensive schemes of work which allow curriculum coverage to be maintained;
- Sometimes, an absent member of staff can teach remotely and via Belmont's VLE (My Learning) teachers can teach directly to the classrooms via MLTV;
- The Exams Officer will publish clear guidance on internal deadlines prior to external deadlines to allow relevant Departments and the Academic Deputy Head to pre-empt any missed deadlines and to seek appropriate information from other members of staff.

#### D. 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

- Active recruitment of a bank of trusted invigilators well ahead of time;
- Careful timetabling of staff during exam periods;
- Appropriate and continuous training with regard to JCQ regulations and to Safeguarding;
- Ensuring internal exams are invigilated to the same “formal” standards as for public examinations so that appropriate Belmont staff gain the necessary experience.

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#### E. 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.*

##### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- To establish first choice exam destinations and ensure timetabling of rooms works in this regard;
- To timetable alternative rooms as a contingency and ensure staff are aware of potential impact should the contingency rooms be quickly required.

#### F. 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

- Promptly reporting any incidents to the relevant awarding body/bodies which might compromise any aspect of assessment delivery such as a cyber-attack
- Where candidates produce work electronically, ensuring their work is backed-up regularly and stored securely on the centre’s IT system and backed up to the cloud.
- Ensuring protection of the candidates’ work from corruption and considering the risks and implications of any cyber-attack
- Following and regularly reviewing National Cyber Security Centre advice for support in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work / Using the NCSC's free Web Check and Mail Check services to help protect from cyber-attacks
- Exams Officer has hard files for timetabling and resources. All that can be continued remotely. With the support of Eduthing, our network backed up online using Redstor
- SENCo has hard copies filed on-site.

## G. 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*

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Maintain hard-copy records and electronic back-up of final entries, seating plans, contingency exam room plans etc.
- Failure at Entry Deadline -Exams Officer to contact awarding bodies as quickly as possible to identify alternative route for processing entries (e.g. via exam board secure websites).
- Failure during exams preparation -Exams Officer to inform awarding bodies of ongoing situation
- Failure at results release time -Exams Officer to contact awarding bodies as quickly as possible to identify alternative route for receiving results (e.g. via exam board secure sites).

## H. 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

### Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Invigilators, SLT and Exams Officer to ensure emergency evacuation plan is followed, maintaining the integrity of the exam
- Candidates to be held separately, avoiding contact with other pupils, and ensuring that they do not talk to one another; candidates will be relocated to another of our venues wherever possible
- Awarding bodies to be advised as appropriate
- Refer to the School's Crisis Management Plan

## I. Disruption of teaching time - 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

- To communicate issues promptly to awarding bodies, staff, parents using the website, email and parent portal;
- To use technology to best advantage offering a comprehensive teaching and learning programme online;

**J. 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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- As with Section 8, to inform and communicate quickly with parents, awarding bodies and staff;
- To seek use of an alternative venue for the sitting of examinations;
- Apply to awarding bodies for special consideration where appropriate.
  
- COVID-19 disruption
- Follow all national/local guidelines (of the day)
- If student tests positive for COVID-19 follow PHE guidelines, including NHS track and trace to ascertain if candidate(s) have been in close contact with other students/staff in school
- Contact parents/carers to inform of the procedures.
- Consider special consideration applications if students are self-isolating

**K. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period**

(including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- As with Section 8, to inform and communicate quickly with parents, awarding bodies and staff;
- To use Duke of Kent School for the sitting of examinations;
- To use technology to best advantage offering a comprehensive revision programme online;
- COVID-19 disruption
- Follow all national/local guidelines (of the day)
- Contact awarding bodies for further guidance for a national/local lockdown
- Contact parents/carers to inform of the procedures. Ensure these are widely shared via website and media sources
- Consider special consideration applications if students are self-isolating

**L. 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

- To inform awarding bodies;
- To obtain immediate advice from the examination board regarding how to isolate students until examination papers can be obtained;
- To instigate an isolation plan for the students affected, maintaining close links of communication with all relevant parties, including parents;
- If isolation is required overnight, to utilise the boarding facilities, contacting parents as necessary and deploying the SMT to oversee carefully, yet supportive supervision;
- To source alternative couriers as appropriate for delivery of hard copies;
- To obtain electronic access to examination papers if appropriate and whilst maintaining total integrity;

**M. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

*Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- To communicate with the relevant awarding bodies to arrange a timescale for transportation of the exam scripts;
- To ensure careful and secure storage of exam scripts upon completion until such time that they can be transported.

**N. 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*

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Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- To inform the awarding bodies of the nature of the occurrence;
- Securely maintain any remaining scripts or assessment evidence;
- Provide photographic or video evidence and swift written reports to explain nature of the damage or the issue surrounding the unavailability of assessment evidence for the awarding bodies' verification;
- Awarding bodies generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement, as specified by the relevant awarding body and in consultation with the regulators (using evidence such as mocks, interim assessments, predicted grades etc.);
- Candidates re-take the assessment that has been affected at a subsequent assessment period (if possible).

- O. Centre 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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Contact the awarding bodies to discuss alternative plans;
- Contact other local educational establishments to see if we can make use of their facilities.



### 3. Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

#### A. Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

##### 1. Contingency planning

Awarding organisations are required to establish, maintain and comply with an up-to-date detailed written contingency plan, to mitigate any incident they have identified may occur. This includes having communication plans for external parties ([Ofqual General Condition of Recognition A6](#)). Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

##### 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

##### 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 questions 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

1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
2. 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](#)
- [FAB's guidance on special considerations](#)

## 6. Wider communications

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them.

## 7. Widespread national disruption

In the event of widespread sustained national disruption, the 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 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 30 November 2022) <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>]

## B. JCQ

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.
2. 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>
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency days' for examinations, summer 2023. 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>
7. The designation of a 'contingency days' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.
8. In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2023, 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 is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling 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.
9. 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 taken directly from JCQ *Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2022-2023* <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>

*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>

## Wales

*School closures - examinations* <https://gov.wales/school-closures-examinations>

## Northern Ireland

*Exceptional closure days* <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days>

*Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School* <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools>

*School closures* <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-closures>

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