EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN 2023-2024

Issue Date: 01.09.2023

This plan is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Head of Centre	Anthony Harmer
Exams Officer Line Manager (Senior leader)	Naima Elmansouri
Exams Officer	Available upon request
Exams Administrators	Available upon request
Head of Quality	Available upon request
ALS lead	Available upon request
Senior leader(s)	Available upon request

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at ELATT. 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 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 for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This plan also confirms ELATT compliance with JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (section 5.3) 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. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.*

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. 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

- *Senior Leaders to cover the duties of the Exams officer and co-ordinate the smooth running of the exams*

2. ALS Lead 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

- *Sixth Form delivery: duties to be covered by Exams Officer, and if the Exam Officer is also unavailable, Sixth Form Administrator to cover. Both staff are fully trained*
- *The Vocational Learning Manager to co-ordinate cover arrangements and include trained Keyworkers if necessary. This process applies to both Sixth Form and vocational adult learners*
- *In Life Skills, the Head of Life Skills to support the Exams Administrator to cover these duties*

3. 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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *In the absence of the subject leader, the responsibility for the above tasks lies with their immediate line manager, the closest Senior Tutor with the same subject knowledge, and Head of Department*

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

- *Head of Quality has trained the Exams Officer, Exams Administrator and Sixth Form Administrator in invigilation as emergency cover*
- *Head of Quality to train Exams Officer as Invigilator to cover Head of Quality in the event of absence*
- *Maintain records of CPD on management system*
- *Careful planning of cover on exam days, including scheduling of 'floating invigilator'*

5. 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

- *Regular maintenance and assessment of Kingsland Road centre to minimise the risk of an accident happening*
- *Use Whitmore Community Centre, Simple Gifts as a backup venue (venues where we are already booked)*
- *Use Haggerston Community and Tomlinson Centre (local centres where we are not currently booked)*

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

- *Ensure that Tech Support test all systems in good time before the event*
- *Ensure suitable cover from Tech Support before and during all exams*

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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Ensure suitable cover from Tech Support before and during all exams*
- *Ensure that Tech Support test all systems in good time before the event*

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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *The relevant Awarding body would be contacted and special consideration requested for the candidates involved*

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

- *Online learning*
- *Remote working*

- *Use Whitmore Community Centre, Simple Gifts as a backup venue (venues where we are already booked)*

10. Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- *Candidates at risk of being unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *The relevant Awarding body would be contacted and special consideration requested for the candidates involved*
- *Where necessary, provide transportation for the student to access the exams centre*

11. Centre at risk of being unable 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 at risk of being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- *Use Whitmore Community Centre, Simple Gifts as a backup venue (venues where we are already booked).*
- *Use Haggerston Community and Tomlinson Centre (local centres where we are not currently booked)*

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

- *The relevant Awarding body would be contacted with as much notice as possible and secure electronic copies of the exam requested*
- *We would 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, consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date*

13. Disruption to transporting 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

- *Exams scripts would be held in the secure safe until the collection*
- *If the postal service is disrupted, use an alternative professional courier*

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

- *The relevant awarding body would be notified and special consideration requested for the candidates*

15. 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

- *Ensure adequate staff cover on results days*
- *Use online access facility to access results and then communicate the results to candidates, including transcripts of results, at an alternative venue, and provide certificates once access to the exams centre is again possible*
- *Contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible*

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofqual-student-guide-2023/ofqual-student-guide-2023?_hsenc=p2ANqtz--9pPEEJce5ldoel1xLZ9hp5UJIRaWRK2cePXt6SSrprpfeGa5XXa_4oqCATFOHqqlIk6cq

JCQ

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies 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.

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 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/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

The designation of contingency days 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 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 last 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.

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 the contingency arrangements so that they may take them 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 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 www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents
JCQ notice - Preparing for disruption to examinations (effective from 11 October 2021) www.jcq.org.uk/examsoffice/other-documents
General Regulations for Approved Centres www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations
Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms
Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms
Instructions for conducting examinations www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conductingexaminations
A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-specialconsideration/regulations-and-guidance

GOV.UK
Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC)
The NCSC's free Web Check and Mail Check services can help protect schools from cyber-attacks. Two NCSC cyber security services, which are already helping thousands of organisations to protect their websites and email servers from cyber-attacks, are now available to all UK schools. Both tools are available free of charge, are quick to set up, and thereafter run automatically. More information is available from the NCSC website.

The Department for Education has been asking centres to review National Cyber Security Centre advice following increasing number of cyber-attacks involving ransomware infections. The NCSC information supports centres in cyber security preparedness and mitigation work.

Ransomware attacks continue and the Department is reminding centres to review the NCSC advice and to take precautions. This includes ensuring that you have backups in place for your key services and data.

For ease of reference, the Department has highlighted key links relating to the NCSC cyber security guidance below:
1.   More ransomware attacks on UK education – www.ncsc.gov.uk
2.   Ransomware advice and guidance for your IT teams to implement
3.   Offline backups in an online world
4.   Backing up your data
5.   Practical resources to help improve your cyber security
6.   Building Resilience: Ransomware and the risks to schools and ways to prevent it
7.   School staff offered training to help shore up cyber defences – www.ncsc.gov.uk