

Exam contingency plan (2024-2025)

Date written/last reviewed	October 2024
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Date of next review:	October 2025 This procedure is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process at Grey Court 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.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by the *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*.

This plan also confirms Grey Court School is compliant with the JCQ regulation (section 5.3, *General Regulations for Approved Centres 2024-25*) 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.*

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:

- *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*
 - exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
 - candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
 - internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators
- *Exam time*
 - required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
 - candidates' scripts not dispatched as required 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:

- Should the examinations officer be on extended absence and the Head of Exams is covering the role, the Head of Exams should contact the relevant awarding organisations to ensure they have access to all systems / information available to the centre.

Entries:

- The examinations officer will make early estimates / estimated entries with the awarding bodies based on the subject cohort size. In their absence the Exams assistant will carry out this task, in the event

that neither the EO or Head of Exams can fulfil this, and as we are part of a multi-academy trust the examinations officer from one of the other centres could be used to complete this part of the examination process. Alternatively, the school would employ a member of agency staff.

- The examinations officer will create the entry marksheets within the MIS system for teaching staff to complete. An internal deadline will be provided which will be 2 weeks earlier than the awarding organisation deadline of 21 February 2025. If entries are not completed by this deadline the examinations officer will make the entries for the subject based on candidates allocated to that subject. Withdrawals can then be made at a later date where refunds for entries are still applicable. In their absence the Exams assistant will carry out this task. In the event that neither the EO nor Head of Exams can fulfil this, and are as part of a multi-academy trust, the examinations officer from one of the other centres could be used to complete this part of the examination process. Alternatively, the school would employ a member of agency staff.

Pre-exams:

- If the examinations officer is on extended absence and is unable to complete the work from an outside location, the entries / timetabling / mark submission, room and invigilation allocation will need to be completed by the Head of Exams or third party. As part of a multi-academy trust the examinations officer from one of the other centres could be used to complete this part of the examination process. Alternatively, the school would employ a member of agency staff.
- The Head of Exams is currently being trained on the exam process, so this can be extended to entries / timetabling / mark allocation / room and invigilation allocation.

Exam time:

- The Head of Exams and the invigilation team are fully trained in running examinations and the rules and regulations set by JCQ. In the absence of the examinations officer, the Head of Exams with support from the Lead invigilators would oversee the day to day running of examinations and packaging of scripts for dispatch under the management of the Associate Headteacher.
- In the absence of the examinations officer, the Head of Exams could complete any exam reports such as malpractice and also apply for special consideration and issues relating to script collection. Should the Head of Exams need support then as we are part of a multi-academy trust, the examinations officer from one of the other centres will assist with completing these tasks. Alternatively, the school would employ a member of agency staff and would be able to complete this part of the exam process.

Results and Post Results:

- If the examinations officer is on extended absence and is unable to download results, this will be completed by The Head of Exams. If this is not possible then as we are part of a multi-academy trust the examinations officer from one of the other centres could be used to complete this part of the examination process. Alternatively, the school would employ a member of agency staff.
- If the examinations officer is on extended absence and is unable to process post results, this will be completed by the Head of Exams. If this is not possible then as we are part of a multi-academy trust the examinations officer from one of the other centres could be used to complete this part of the examination process. Alternatively, the school would employ a member of agency staff.

2. Access Arrangements Lead / 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:

- *Pre-exams*
 - approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body
 - modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- *Exam time*
 - access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions:

- Candidates are referred to the SEN team for assessment. In the absence of the SEN Co-ordinator who applies for the access arrangements, the SEN Assistant will request the arrangements and vice-versa. If access arrangements are required but have not been requested, the examinations officer will request special consideration from the awarding organisations.
- If modified papers are required and have not been requested by the SEN team before the awarding organisations deadline, the examinations officer / SEN team can enlarge / copy the exam paper onto coloured paper.
- If support has not been arranged by the SEN team for a candidate who requires support, the team will re-allocate one of the class LSAs to assist with the examination. Alternatively, an Invigilator who has been trained will be allocated to the exam room.

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*
- *Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines*

Centre actions:

- The examinations officer will make early estimates / estimated entries with the awarding bodies based on the subject cohort size.
- The examinations officer will create the entry marksheets within the MIS system for teaching staff to complete. An internal deadline will be provided which will be 2 weeks earlier than the awarding organisation deadline of 21 February. If entries are not completed by this deadline the examinations officer will make the entries for the subject based on candidates allocated to that subject. Withdrawals can then be made at a later date where refunds for entries are still applicable.
- The school sets an earlier deadline to ensure that assessment marks are submitted by the awarding organisations deadline. The examinations officer will contact the school Head of Faculty if marks are not completed by this deadline.
- Awarding organisations will also contact the centre should assessment marks not be received.
- Candidates will be made aware by the department of their centre assessed mark once completed by the subject department. Students will be given the opportunity to appeal the mark awarded by the teacher.

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:

- Grey Court School regularly checks the requirement for invigilators, recruits and trains staff accordingly. On the small chance that the school did not have enough invigilators to run examinations in accordance with the JCQ guidelines, members of school support staff would be trained to fill in where required until more invigilators are recruited.

- On peak exam days, where there is a shortage of invigilators the examinations officer and members of the school support team would undertake the required duty.
- Should an invigilator be absent on the day of exam, the examinations officer will contact other members of the team to cover the duty or invigilate the exam.

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:

- If there are insufficient / appropriate rooms available for exams or on peak days, lessons will be moved from the classes to ensure that exams can proceed.
- If the main Sports Hall or Gym is not available due to an unexpected incident, other locations around the school will be used to accommodate the candidates.
- If required alternative venues off school site will be used, after seeking approval is received from the relevant awarding organisations.
- If necessary we will use The Hollyfield School as they are part of our Multi Academy Trust .

6. 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*
- *Systems Failure during an exam*

Centre actions:

- The school IT department creates a back-up of the MIS system every evening to ensure the most up to date data is stored and available for re-installation should the system fail.
- The IT department will liaise with CAPITA relating to the MIS system if required.
- If the MIS system fails at the final entry deadline or results release, the school will contact the various awarding organisations to seek an alternative method of uploading entries and downloading exam results.

Students that work on computers to accommodate their access arrangements in various locations in the school:

- The computers are networked and the students work is backed up onto the schools secure server which is only able to be accessed by the schools IT department. Should anything happen in the event of an exam the student's work can be retrieved by the IT department.
- The students' exams accounts are wiped at the end of each day.

7. 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:

- Should the fire alarm sound, the Invigilator in the exam room will follow the school emergency procedure. Candidates will be advised to stop writing and remain in their seats. The stoppage time will be noted on the board.
- Students will be evacuated by row following the invigilator / member of staff allocated to them.
- They will be reminded that they are still under exam controlled conditions and taken to the far side of the playground.
- The invigilators will if possible lock the room behind them to ensure the papers left in the room remain in a secure environment.
- Students will be readmitted back to the exam room once the all clear has been given.
- The Examinations Officer will apply for special consideration for those students.

8. 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:

- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of the school to prepare students for examinations as usual.
- The school will prioritise students who will be facing examinations shortly.
- Where possible students will be entered for exams in the next exam series.
- The school will communicate with parents through the school website / parentmail.

9. 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:

- The centre will communicate directly with the appropriate awarding bodies at the outset to make them aware of the issue.
- The exams officer will liaise with the candidate / parent to identify whether the candidate can sit the examination at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations.
- If possible, offer the candidate the opportunity to sit the exam in the next exam series.
- Apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements

(Candidates are only eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination for other reasons they should be aware that special consideration rules will not apply)

10. Centre unable to open as normal during the examination period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre is unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations.

Centre actions:

- Where possible the school should open for examinations only. 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 they are able to open.

- The centre must inform each of the awarding organisations if the school is unable to open for examinations and which examination will be affected.
- Use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. Another school within our Multi Academy Trust or share facilities with other centres nearby or use other public buildings if possible)
- Apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements (see Scenario 8).
- If possible, offer the candidates the opportunity to sit the exam in the next exam series.

11. 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:

- The centre will communicate directly with the awarding organisations
- The awarding organisations will be required to source alternative couriers for delivery of hard copies
- The awarding organisations will provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network.
- Or fax examination papers to centres if electronic transfer is not possible.
(The examinations officer will need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions).

12. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts /assessment evidence

Centre actions:

- If the courier is unable to collect the exam scripts, the centre will seek advice from the awarding organisations regarding alternative collection.
- The centre should not make their own arrangements for transportation without approval from awarding organisations.
- The centre will ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts, as per the JCQ guidelines until collection.

13. 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:

- The head of centre / examinations officer, will report immediately to the relevant awarding organisations and subsequently to students and their parents should large scale damage occur to examination scripts / assessment materials.
- The awarding organisations will generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement, as defined by the awarding organisations in consultation with the regulators.
- Where possible candidates retake the assessment that has been affected at a subsequent assessment window.

14. Centre unable to distribute results as normal

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

Centres to contact awarding organisations about alternative options. [JCP scenario 11]

Centre actions:

- The centre will contact the awarding organisations about alternative options.
- The centre should make arrangements to access results at an alternative site.
- If possible, share facilities with other schools and colleges.

15. Contingency Day

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- In the event of national or local disruption to examinations, the Centre is unable to administer exams on the Awarding body's instruction.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

The designation of a 'contingency day' 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.

Centre actions:

- Remind candidates that they must remain available for contingency days should an awarding body need to invoke its contingency plan.
- The centre will move examinations as per awarding body's instructions to the contingency day.

16. Escalation process

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- In the event that the direct line manager for exams is unavailable or absent, then the head of centre will avail himself should the examinations team require any higher level support.
- In the event that the Head of Centre is unavailable or absent then one of the deputy heads or assistant heads will be called upon. Alternatively if a higher level of support or decision making is required then the school will call upon the CEO of the Multi Academy Trust.

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

1. Contingency planning

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

When drafting contingency plans, you should consider the following guidance:

1.1 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
- [Action for FE Colleges](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [Public health guidance to support autumn exams](#) from the Department for Education

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

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

See also:

- [JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#)

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](#). Grey Court School will refer to our own emergency evacuations 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.

JCQ

(JCQ guidance below taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2024-2025
<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

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-conducting-examinations

A guide to the special consideration process www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance