

Ysgol Aberconwy



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Examinations Contingency Plan

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THIS POLICY HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE FULL GOVERNING BODY

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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 Ysgol Aberconwy. 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 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** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This plan also confirms Ysgol Aberconwy's compliance with JCQ general regulations (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.

Causes of potential 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 exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines •
- sufficient invigilators not recruited and trained

• *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
- 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 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:

- Data Manager, Miss C Smith, trained to deputise for examinations officer to cover the IT administrative aspect of the role, and the Deputy Head/Exam Line Manager, Mrs G Murphy, will run the day-to-day management of the examinations. The Data Manager is a key holder to the secure room. (other key holders: Mr I Gerrard, Mr K Bratch, Mrs W Baxter) SLT to nominate members of staff/SLT to start exams in the main Hall.
- In the event of long-term absence of the Exam Officer the school will contact External Relations Officer at Qualifications Wales for any required information or training. Details are: Annie Allitt, 07464 543 621, annie.allitt@qualificationswales.org

2. ALNCo 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
- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- staff providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained
- *Exam time*
 - access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions:

- MLB to nominate a deputy, and an administrative assistant, Mrs N Rowlands, to cover role. These are trained in the above actions.

3. Specified Leadership team members extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

i. EO line manager :

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including :

- *Support for Exams officer*
- *Assistance at start and end of examinations •*
- *Organisation of students*

Centre actions:

- *EO Line manage to update head of centre regularly on action taken*
- *EO to keep head of centre abreast of JCQ updates and responsibilities •*
- *Invigilator training and sharing of procedures with other SLT members*

ii. Head of centre

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including :

- *Support for Exams officer*
- *Assistance at start and end of examinations •*
- *Organisation of students*

Centre actions:

- *EO Line manage to update SLT regularly on action taken •*
- *All SLT to be aware of exams procedures and protocols.*

4. 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*
- *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*
- *late or other penalty fees being charged by awarding bodies*
- *Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines*

Centre actions:

- HoD to ensure exams entries are made for any absent staff in consultation with EO •
- If HoD absent, EO to ensure entries are made in consultation with SLT

5. 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:

- Internal invigilators, mentors and support staff to be trained and utilised alongside the external team of trained staff.

6. 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:

- Alternative venues to be sourced from the teaching rooms timetable on SIMs
- Alternative venue of the Conwy Council Sports Hall situated by Ysgol Aberconwy if the school assembly Hall cannot be used.

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*
- *Power outage immediately prior to or during an on-screen test*

Centre actions:

- The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to resolve the issue.

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:

- Centre to communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential for disruption to teaching time and plans to address this. [*Joint Contingency Plan (JCP) scenario 1*]

Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, Ysgol Aberconwy will prepare students, as usual, for examinations. In the case of modular courses, Ysgol Aberconwy may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series.

9. Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations because of a crisis – 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:

- The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue. The centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue. [*Joint Contingency Plan (JCP) scenario 3*]

The Examinations Officer will also consider the following options that enable candidates to take their examinations if the school is able to open but at a later time.

- Considering moving the start times of the examination (according to the regulations) for all candidates (see Section 6.2 of the JCQ Instructions)
- Being aware of the rules for very late arrivals (see Section 21 of the JCQ Instructions).

Wherever possible, it is always in the best interest for candidates to sit the examination. However, if candidates who are unable to sit the examination meet the criteria, special consideration through absence or acceptable reasons is an option.

10. 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)

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 centre 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:

<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>

- Alternative venue of the Conwy Council Sports Hall situated by Ysgol Aberconwy if the school assembly Hall cannot be used.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations and we have been unable to make alternative arrangements, or our centre is open, but some candidates are unable to reach it because of, for example, difficult or dangerous travel conditions (see 8 above).

Centre actions:

- Centre to invoke centre contingency plan which must focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations.
- A centre which is unable to open as normal for examinations must inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible. *[JCP scenario 4]*
- For candidates who are unable to sit the examination and are entered for non-terminal examination units which are available in subsequent examination series, they shall be entered for the next available series.
- Where such candidates are entered for terminal (final) examinations, applications for Special Consideration may be made, provided minimum requirements are met (see the published criteria indicated in the JCQ publication 'Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments'). Awarding organisations will ensure that any applications for special considerations as a result of such disruption will be reviewed across awarding organisations to ensure consistency of decision making.

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 to communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers. *[JCP scenario 2]*
- awarding organisations to provide the centre with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network. The Exam officer would ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions. 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)

12. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- The centre, due to being in Wales, is not in scope for the yellow label service.
- Franking machine not working and therefore unable to send completed examination scripts/assessment evidence

Centre actions:

- Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
- If the Franking machine is unable to be fixed no later than the next working day, then the Exam Officer will take the completed script packets to Royal Mail and obtain proof of postage/ despatch for each packet of scripts.
- Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination scripts 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:

- It is the responsibility of the head of centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to students and their parents or carers. *[JCP scenario 6]*
- Completed examination scripts and assessment evidence are sent via Royal mail first class and signed for. Proof of postage/despatch and tracking information is kept on file until the results are published. Proof of postage will provide evidence that the candidates' scripts left the centre. This will indicate that the scripts were written at the appointed time and that, should the scripts not be received by the awarding body/examiner, then special consideration may be possible. This is completed in school by using the Franking machine and packed exam papers are collected from school by Royal Mail.

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
- *Centre to contact awarding organisations about alternative options. [JCP scenario 11]*

Centre actions:

Distribution of results:

- Centre to make arrangements to access results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- Centre to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site • The 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
- Centre to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible • The Exam officer to access results from home via secure awarding bodies sites. The Exam officer to distribute results to pupils via secure school e mail.

15. Cyber Security

In light of the continual threat of target cyber-attacks on schools in order to extract a ransom, the school leadership team and IT support have reviewed the approaches within school. These systems are designed to minimise disruption to the Centre Determined Grade / Teacher Assessed Grade process.

a) Data

In order to ensure all grades used in the production of CDGs / TAGs are safely stored, the leadership link person in charge of ARR uses One Drive / Office 365 to secure these. Grades are put on LDMR (Learner Decision Making Records) on the staff intranet and then uploaded by the Exams Officer directly onto the relevant exam board's secure site.

Any data used by the Exams Officer / leadership link ARR is backed up on site daily. In addition, SIMs information is backed up off site daily, so that not everything is on the school server.

b) Pupil Evidence / Work

Most evidence is a hard copy and securely stored / locked away by the relevant subject Head of Department. Other subjects like, IT / Media may have completed work / usually on either Office 365 or TEAMS. As these are Microsoft based, then they will be as secure as that company's own systems.

Overall, we believe that the school has put in place practical systems to mitigate any ransom demands.

DfE and National Cyber Security Centre Ransomware Update on JCQ
<https://www.jcq.org.uk/dfе-and-national-cyber-security-centre-ransomware-update/>

16. Industrial Action

The Department for Education has updated its guidance on handling strike action in schools
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-strike-action-in-schools> in England in light of the industrial action in 2023.

The guidance recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days and should review their contingency plans to make this happen. Schools, colleges, and other exam centres should speak to the relevant awarding organisations if they are expecting any disruption that might affect the sitting of exams and assessments.

Centre actions:

- The school will offer catch-up lessons and/or arrange additional revision sessions.
- In the event of strike action, non-teaching trained exam invigilators would be deployed to invigilate the examinations, if there was a shortage due to strike action.
- The exam board would be contacted to highlight any barriers to the smooth running of the examinations.
- The Head teacher is accountable for the conduct of examinations and the provision of facilities in the centre.
- The school will remain open for examinations and examination candidates where possible, even if the school is closed due to restricting attendance.
- The Contingency Plan will be reviewed in advance of each exam or assessment series.

Contingency plan guidance on how to deal with major disruptions that may affect examination candidates:

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

17. Contingency Arrangements During a Pandemic.

Ysgol Aberconwy will follow the latest advice from Qualifications Wales, JCQ, 'Joint Contingency Plan' and 'Welsh Government Operational Guidance for Schools and Settings'.

OPERATIONAL ADVICE

- Prior to each exam series the Headteacher, Exams Officer and Senior Leadership Team member in charge of examinations will convene a meeting to ensure that all possible contingency arrangements are discussed prior to the actual exam season starting.
- For Winter series examinations if any candidates are unable to attend or miss some of their exams if they have met the 'minimum necessary assessments' for that subject the school can apply for 'special consideration.' However, if candidates miss an exam and take less than the minimum necessary assessments (and therefore cannot be awarded a grade in the Winter series) they will have the option to be awarded a grade in the Summer series.
- Contact information for candidates and invigilators will be kept by the Exams Officer and provided to the Headteacher so that this can be provided to Test, Trace, Protect if required. This is especially important for seating plans.
- Examination candidates need to be kept separate from other students when arriving for examinations, including those who arrive late.
- A plan / arrangements (prior to the exam series) will be produced by the Exams Officer, Senior Leadership Team member and Headteacher to cover all arrival and departures (including different times for exams) to the examination room and site. Such arrangements will be shared with staff, parents and pupils.
- The Health and Safety Officer will arrange with Sodexo and the Exams Officer for cleaning of examination rooms following latest guidance (Guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings).
- Seating arrangements will follow JCQ's 'Instructions for conducting examinations' and the Exams Officer with Sodexo will ensure that this is adhered to.
- Pupils in different contact groups, but sitting in the same examination room, must be seated 2 metres apart from each other.
- All rooms holding examinations will be ventilated following Government advice for schools.
- Invigilators can walk up and down the aisles, but will predominantly spend time in locations around the room where they are **at least** 2 metres away from the nearest desk and can see all the candidates in the room.
- Candidates do not need to wear face coverings while taking examinations, nor do invigilators. However, both can choose to do so if they wish.
- The Exams Officer will, in addition to training invigilators, brief them to minimise contact from pupils and staff. External invigilators will still follow procedures required for visitors.
- Invigilators do not need to wear gloves when collecting exam papers, but they should be encouraged to wash hands thoroughly and more frequently.
- Invigilators should be briefed by the Exams Officer to stand alongside candidates when interacting with them,

rather than face to face.

- For prolonged encounters of over 15 minutes (scribes / readers) staff should still maintain a 2 metre distance.
- For pupils with specific needs the Exams Officer and ALNCO will brief staff following 'Guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged Learners'.
- Before any examination the candidates are screened in line with school procedures.
- If a candidate has symptoms or a member of the household is symptomatic they cannot take exams during the specified time of their isolation.
- If a candidate has a negative test they can attend an examination following advice in 'Coronavirus (Covid-19) test Result.'

Disruption to teaching time prior to exams

- If centres are closed or candidates are unable to attend normal teaching, it is the responsibility of schools to prepare students as usual.
- In the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series.

Disruption to distribution of exam papers

- The Exams Officer is to contact awarding organisations to ensure papers have been sent or there is electronic access via a secure external network in case of an emergency.
- If the latter, the Exams Officer should ensure copies are made and stored under secure conditions.

Destruction of completed exam scripts before marking

- The Exams Officer will contact the awarding body to seek advice. It could involve:
 - a) Awarding organisation to generate candidate mark for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence.
 - b) Retaking affected assessment in a subsequent exam series.

Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning

Joint contingency plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

<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>

GOV.UK

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

Emergency planning and response: Exam and assessment disruption

www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings

Dispatch of exam scripts guide: Ensuring the service runs smoothly; Contingency planning

www.gov.uk/government/publications/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-yellow-label-service

Emergencies and severe weather: schools and early years settings

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-planning-and-response-for-education-childcare-and-childrens-social-care-settings>

Teaching time lost due to severe weather conditions

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions>

Wales

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

Opening schools in extremely bad weather: guidance for schools gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools

Ofqual

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.

General contingency guidance

- [emergency planning and response](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [handling strike action in schools](#) from the Department for Education in England
- [school organisation: 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 terms and school closures](#) from NI Direct
- [opening schools in extremely bad weather](#) - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- [police guidance](#) from National Counter Terrorism Security Office and partners on preparing for threats

JCQ

- JCQ Preparing for disruption to examinations: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/preparing-for-disruption-to-examinations/>
- JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/>
- JCQ Notice to Centres - Examination contingency plan/examinations policy www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/
- 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

National Cyber Security Centre

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 - 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 - NCSC.GOV.UK](#)