

**BALLYMENA ACADEMY**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

**IN RELATION TO**

**EXAMINATION CONTINGENCY PLAN**

**2024/2025**

**Policy ratified at**

**Board of Governors’ Meeting**

**24th February, 2025.**

**Ballymena Academy Examination Contingency Plan 2024-25**

In the event of disruption, the school will follow guidance provided:-

* JCQ Notice to Centres – [Examination Contingency Plan](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/)
* [Exam System Contingency Plan : England, Wales and Northern Ireland](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland)
* JCQ ‘Instructions for conducting examinations 1 September 2024 -31 August 25’
* Additional guidance or directives provided by relevant bodies.

This document is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations.

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* Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning :-
  + - Ofqual
    - JCQ

**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 Ballymena Academy. 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 scenarios contained in the Joint contingency plan (JCP) in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This plan complies with JCQ general regulations (section 5) in that:

“It is the responsibility of the head of centre to ensure that his/her centre... has in place a written examination contingency plan/examinations policy which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to have a robust contingency plan in place, minimising risk to examination administration, should the Exams Officer be absent at a crucial stage of the examination cycle.”

All awarding organisations are required to have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to such disruptions. This Examination Contingency Plan takes into account these processes and procedures and is designed to complement them, not replace them.

The plan will be implemented in the event of major disruption to the system, such as widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather or power failures. Any actions taken will be subject to the advice of the official agencies dealing with the specific circumstances being faced, for example the police, Environment Agency or Health Protection Agency.

Implementing the plan will safeguard the interests of candidates while maintaining the integrity of the examination system and safeguarding qualification standards.

**Communication**

In the event of localised disruption communication to teachers and students will take place through the SLT and Exams Officer following agreement with the Principal. In the event of major disruption, details of specific contingencies agreed across organisations involved in the examinations process will be confirmed on relevant websites and proactively communicated to relevant stakeholders. This includes communication between the organisations involved in the response and communications to stakeholders such as centres, candidates, parents or carers and the public.

The organisations involved in this Joint Contingency Plan are committed to:

* Sharing timely and accurate information as required to meet the aims of the plan.
* Communicating with stakeholders so they are aware of disruption to the exams, the contingency measures being implemented, and any actions required of them as a result.
* Ensuring any messages to the public are clear and accurate.

**General Procedures in the event of disruption**

* In the event of an emergency impacting on the immediate continuance of the examination, the agreed JCQ procedures will be followed.
* In the event of a disruption which does not necessitate evacuation, e.g. an individual medical emergency, the examination may continue with allowance being made for in terms of any impact on timing. The appropriate examination board will be informed, and special consideration can be applied for as relevant to the circumstances.
* In the event of other examination disruption, including school closure, the school will follow guidance provided by relevant local or national agencies.

**Causes of potential disruption to the exam process**

1. **Head of Centre being absent at key points in the exam cycle**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks/ roles required not undertaken including:

* Overall responsibility for Ballymena Academy as an Examination Centre.
* The National Centre Number Register (NCNR) updated annually.
* Directing centre staff to updated publications.
* Advising on appeals and re-marks.
* Reporting all suspicions or actual incidents of malpractice.

**Centre actions:**

* The Deputy Principal willoversee the responsibilities should the absence of the Head of Centre have the potential to affect the implementation of the above tasks/ roles.

1. **Vice-Principal with oversight of examinations and assessment being absent at key points in the exam cycle.**

**Centre actions:**

* The Principal to nominate a member of the Senior Leadership Team to oversee responsibilities should the absence of the Vice-Principal with oversight of examinations and assessment have the potential to affect his/her role in to supporting and overseeing the work of the Examinations Officer.

1. **Exam officer (EO) 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;
* identification of essential key tasks, key dates and deadlines not undertaken;
* 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 clashes not identified and resolved.

*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:**

* Principal to nominate a member of the senior leadership team to oversee responsibilities, together with the Assistant Examinations Officer, should absence of EO have the potential to affect the meeting of deadlines.
* Assistant Examinations Officer to work closely with EO in order to ensure familiarity with the process.
* To maintain a rolling programme of training and mutual support to ensure that all coverers for the Exams Officer are kept abreast of changes to legislation, procedures and administrative systems congruent with covering in the absence of the Exams Officer.
* To have nominated member(s) of SLT present on the days leading up to and in the aftermath of all public examination result publications and who will be available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays.

**4 . Learning Support Co-ordinator 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;
* 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:**

* Principal to nominate a member of the senior leadership team to oversee responsibilities, should absence of the Learning Support Co-ordinator have the potential to affect the meeting of deadlines.
* Regular meetings between the Learning Support Co-ordinator and, if appropriate, the Assistant Learning Support Co-ordinator, and their line-manager, to keep them appraised of ongoing issues with access arrangements and pre-planning of examinations related issues.

**5 . Disruption to public transport preventing students from reaching the Examination Centre.**

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

* Candidates unable to take examinations due to planned lack of public transport;
* Candidates unable to take examinations due to sudden disruption to public transport;
* Candidates arrive late due to public transport problems.

**Centre actions:**

* Monitor news agencies on a regular basis to identify any potential transportation difficulties.
* Centre to liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations.
* Centres to offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
* Centres to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements.
* Latecomers to be permitted to take their examinations providing they are within the JCQ regulations.

**6. 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:**

* EO responsible for ensuring deadlines are met for submission of grades for NEA ( e.g. coursework /controlled assessment ). Any omissions to be referred to line manager.
* Implementation of a robust system of absence cover for teaching staff, including those within each department who can step in to replace absent colleagues.
* Internal deadlines set in place by the Exams Officer prior to external deadlines to allow the Exams Officer, relevant department to pre-empt any missed deadlines and to seek the appropriate information from other staff members.
* Prioritise examination cohort when arranging cover and reassigning timetable commitments;
* EO to coordinate with relevant HoD, or Assistant HoD in the HoD’s absence in order to ensure entries are correct and all necessary grades and documentation is submitted.

**7 . 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:**

* Active and proactive recruitment of a bank of invigilators well ahead of time.
* Continual training per JCQ regulations and Child Protection.
* Corporate Services Vice-Principal to be informed if recruitment is necessary or proving to be difficult.
* Communicate to all staff that it may be necessary to use staff other than invigilators to ensure exams are fully supervised. All staff should be aware of exam regulations for the correct running of an exam.

**8 . 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:**

* EO to ensure room planning is completed by the end of the spring term in order to identify and potential rooming issues.
* Alternative venues to be made available by teaching staff to ensure exams proceed.
* EO to work with Cover Manager to identify viable alternatives.
* Some classes to be collapsed in order to free up rooms for exams.
* EO to contact Awarding Bodies to apply for use of alternative venues, in very exceptional circumstances.

**9. 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:**

* EO to contact awarding bodies to arrange alternative methods of information exchange.
* Principal to be informed.
* Network manager to liaise with systems management support agencies in order to resolve any issue as quickly as possible.
* EO to work with Network Manager to implement redundant systems as back up if required.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

* MIS system is affected by a cyber-attack.

**Centre actions:**

* Network Manager/IT department to back up data.
* The backups are held offline and may include hard copy records.
* candidates’ work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates’ work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up.
* Systems for restoring services and recovering data from the backups are tested and reliable.
* Creation of an IT Crisis Event Management Plan.

**10. 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:**

* Principal responsible for sourcing alternative venues if school closed for a protracted time.
* Exam cohort to be prioritised when sourcing alternative venues.
* Communication with students and parents e.g. via Google Classroom, Zoom, ParentMail and website etc co-ordinated by Network manager.
* Centre to explore alternative methods of teaching students during the period of closure e.g. Google Classroom , video-conferencing, podcasts etc.
* Head of Centre and Centre staff support students to enable online access to lessons.

**11. 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 to inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible.
* Procedures for absence followed as outlined in the documentation provided by the school. Students’ attention drawn to these procedures during examination briefing assembly.
* EO to liaise with student and/or parent to advise of alternative venue or next opportunity to sit the exam.
* EO to advise student and parents of process for application for special consideration.

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

* Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations.

**Centre actions:**

* Centre to inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible
* Centre to open for examination candidates only, if possible.
* Centre to arrange alternative venues, in agreement with awarding bodies. Choice of venue will be based on the numbers sitting the examination and will include, for example, local church halls and community centres.
* Students offered the opportunity to sit the exam at the next examination season.
* Centres to follow guidance from Ofqual/DfE.
* Centre to inform awarding bodies and parents.

**13. 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 EO to communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers.
* Principal to be informed.
* Centre to seek the advice of the examination board regarding isolation requirements for students until examination papers can be obtained, if appropriate, and to implement an isolation plan for the students effected, informing parents.
* Source alternative couriers for delivery of hard copies.
* Obtain electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network.
* Arrange for a fax of examination papers if electronic transfer is not possible.

**14. 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 communicate with the relevant awarding bodies to arrange a timescale for transportation of the examination scripts.
* To ensure that all examination papers are kept in secure, locked storage as soon as examinations are completed until such time as completed examination scripts can be transported.

**15. 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.

**Centre actions:**

* EO to communicate with awarding bodies immediately.
* Maintain in safe manner any remains of scripts/assessment evidence.
* Provide photographic/video evidence and swift written reports of the nature of the damage or destruction of the scripts/assessment evidence for the awarding organisations’ verification.
* Awarding organisations 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 e.g. from mock examination marks, interim assessments, predicted grades etc.
* Candidates re-take the assessment that has been affected at a subsequent assessment window, if possible.

**16. 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 service.

**Centre actions**:

* The Centre to contact awarding organisations about alternative options.
* EO and Head Teacher to assess alternative arrangements for issuing results with the regulators.
* Principal to inform providers e.g. UCAS/ Further / Higher Education institutions about delay as soon as possible.

**17. Industrial Action**

The Department for Education recommends schools should prioritise the running of examinations and assessments on any strike days. In the event of industrial action during public examinations, the Principal will retain a formal role as ‘Head of Centre’ and will be accountable for the conduct of the examinations and provision of facilities in their centre. It is recommended that centres should remain open for examinations and examination candidates where possible, even if the school is closed or restricting attendance. To this end, the relevant procedures listed above will be followed.

Ref. BA Exam Contingency Plan – Feb 25