

Exam Contingency Plan

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

This policy was adopted by the Governing Body autumn 2020

This policy will be reviewed spring 2022

Key staff involved in contingency planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of centre	Mrs Penny Johnson
Exams officer line manager (Senior Leader)	Mr Liam Smyth
Exams officer	Mrs Jennie Smith
SENCo	Miss Mary Keogh
SLT member(s)	Mrs Penny Johnson
	Mrs Dawn Collis
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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Grays Convent High 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 **Ofqual** Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland which provides guidance in the publication What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted and the **JCQ** Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption of the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

• This plan also confirms Grays Convent High School is compliant with the JCQ regulation (section 5.3, General Regulations for Approved Centres 2020-21) 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:

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
- 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

Assistant Headteacher in charge of examinations has an understanding of the examinations process and can step in to cover the role of the examinations officer if required.

Planning

- ▶ GCSE, BTEC and ELC examination entries commences in July prior to the new academic year starting.
- ► Grays Convent High School (GCHS) have a 6-stage entry process, which all HoDs are informed of in July. The deadline dates are added to the school calendar (Outlook and paper version).
- ▶ Invigilation for the academic year is assessed in September each year. GCHS has long-standing, reliable invigilation staff. The invigilation team are advised of the approximate examinations for the academic year ahead in July each year, allowing time to recruit if necessary.

Entries

- ► The 1st stage of the entry process commences in July by requesting HoDs inform the Examinations Officer of all qualifications that are due to take place within their department each academic year. The deadline for stage 1 is mid-September, which allows sufficient time/planning for early/estimated entries that prompts release of early information. BTEC deadline dates vary from stage 2 as below.
- Summer exam basedata is released in November each year, ahead of February's entry deadline.
 - The 2nd stage of the entry process requires staff to confirm the classes for each qualification. This form is issued in September with a November deadline. BTEC: End of September
 - The 3rd stage of the entry process requires staff to confirm the individual candidates for each qualification. This form is issued in November with a December deadline. BTEC: 1st
 Wednesday in October.
- ▶ In January, HoDs confirm, via a 'Non-Entry Request Form', if they wish to withdraw any students from their qualifications. Withdrawals will only be considered if signed consent has been received in time from parents / carers and students following communication with teaching staff. The headteacher has the final decision on all subject withdrawals. In the headteacher's absence, the deputy headteacher will have the final decision.
 - The 4th stage of the entry process requires staff to sign off all qualification entries for their department. This form is issued in December for returning in early February. Once entries for each exam board have been received, entry marksheets are submitted to the awarding bodies from SIMS Exams Organiser via A2C. This process avoids the exam boards late entry fee commencement date. BTEC: 3rd Wednesday in October.
 - The 5th stage of the entry process is a confirmed print out of all students entered for the qualifications issued to the HoDs. This document is for reference only and does not need to be returned.
- ▶ The 6th and final stage of the entry process confirms all final entries, including any tier changes. The deadline date varies depending on awarding body and academic school holiday dates. WJEC early March, OCR mid-March, AQA and Pearson mid-April. This process ensures that the amendment fee date is avoided. BTEC: 4th Wednesday in January.

Pre-exams

- Invigilators are informed of the training dates for the academic year ahead in July. The team attend
 - o Child Protection Training in September with all GCHS staff.
 - o Invigilation Training in October. This is ahead of the year 11 mocks in November.
- Exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules commence in February following submission of summer entries to the awarding bodies.
- Candidates are briefed on exam timetables in October ahead of year 11 mock examinations. Mocks and PPEs are carried out as summer examinations would be.
- ▶ JCQ Information for Candidates documents are issued via email to all year 11 students in the autumn term. A hard copy is issued and signed for upon receipt by all candidates.
- Awarding body information is distributed by the most suitable means at the time of issue.
- ▶ Headteacher and examinations officer have access to the secure storage facility and follow the regulations set out by JCQ. Assistant headteacher in charge of examinations is aware of the full process involved.
- ▶ HoDs are informed of all internal deadlines to ensure that internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work are submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators in a timely fashion. WJEC 10th March, OCR 3rd Wednesday in March, AQA 3rd Wednesday in April, Pearson 1st Wednesday in May.

Exam time

- ► Full consideration is taken to ensure that exams/assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies
- ▶ Required reports/requests will be submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods in the correct form, and within the deadlines set by the awarding bodies.
- ▶ If candidates' scripts are not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies, the awarding body will be contacted immediately. ParcelForce failed collections are reported to awarding bodies and the ParcelForce head depot as needed. Guidance is followed as instructed.

Results and post-results

- ▶ Remote access is possible to the awarding body secure websites, which can be accessed by the Headteacher and Examinations Officer if required. This access can be used for post-result services.
- ▶ Remote access to SIMS is possible by select staff members, which allows results to be issued via SIMS InTouch to candidates if required in extreme circumstances.

2. SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

Planning

- candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements
- centre fails to recognise its duties towards disabled candidates as defined under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working not collated

Pre-exams

- approval for access arrangements not applied for to the awarding body
- centre-delegated arrangements not put in place

- modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- staff (facilitators) providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained

Exam time

access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Assistant Headteacher in charge of the SENCO has an understanding of the job role and can step in to cover the role if required.

Planning

- candidates are tested/assessed in year 10 to identify potential access arrangement requirements
- Staff evidence of need is obtained for students throughout their time at GCHS.
- Staff evidence to support normal way of working collated in a timely fashion.

Pre-exams

- Approval for access arrangements is applied for, where possible, during year 10 ahead of GCSE examinations.
- ► Centre-delegated arrangements are listed in SIMS Exams Organiser, which generates reports for each examination advising of students who require an access arrangement.
- modified paper requirements are confirmed by the SENCo once identified and in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline
- Invigilation staff providing support to access arrangement candidates are allocated and trained in October of each academic year.

Exam time

Access arrangement candidates are allocated for a separate exam rooms, where possible. Students with extra time allowance are indicated on seating plans for invigilation staff.

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 HoD, the 2ic staff member for each department will be asked to deputise as necessary. The exam entry process deadlines are on the school calendar (Outlook and paper form) for all staff members to access as required.

GCHS staff are asked to sign a declaration to confirm that they have read and understand the JCQ Non-Examination Assessment guidance. This document is signed by all teaching staff who are responsible for teaching a qualification with a Non-Examination Assessment component.

Internal deadlines are set to ensure that candidates are informed of centre-assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body allowing time for candidates to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centre's marking.

Staff are informed of the internal deadline dates set to ensure that NEA samples are generated in a timely fashion to ensure work is submitted to awarding body ahead of their deadlines.

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

- Invigilators are advised of the exams seasons ahead of the new academic year. Currently, for a full cohort examination GCHS will require 7 invigilators per exam session. GCHS have 17-trained invigilators within the team. Allocation for summer examinations commences in February.
- ▶ The minimum JCQ ratio of candidate:invigilator (30:1) is always covered. The examinations office will deputise if required.

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

- Room allocation for summer examinations commences in February.
- If insufficient rooms are available for peak exam days, the headteacher / assistant headteacher in charge of examinations is made aware with as much notice as possible.
- ▶ The headteacher /assistant headteacher in charge of examinations will assist in exam venues as and when required.

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

- Examination entries for the summer qualifications are submitted approximately 2 weeks ahead of the final deadline date to allow for any technical issues that may arise.
- ▶ The entry stage process is spread over the academic year to allow for any failures during exam preparation. Awarding bodies secure website have the facility to upload exam entries if SIMS, our school management system fails.
- Our IT Manager(s) are available for results download dates should failure occur. The awarding bodies secure website have the facility to download all results in SIMS fails.

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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Exam room evacuation procedures are in place and will be followed in required. A whole centre evacuation is practiced during the academic. It is anticipated that a practice exam room evacuation is carried out during the mock or PPE timetable.
- ► GCHS has an invacuation procedure in place, which will be implemented if required. A practice invacuation is practised during the academic year.

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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

▶ GCHS has Google Classrooms active for all teaching staff and pupils. Lessons, assessments and homework is accessed / submitted through this package allowing all students to have access to a normal timetable schedule. Students without online access have been highlighted by head of year and the work is issued via other means.

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

- Individual cases will be assessed as the occur.
- Awarding bodies will be contacted as soon as possible once GCHS has been advised of the crisis.
- Special consideration may be submitted to the awarding bodies, with the appropriate evidence, if the minimum exam criteria has been met.

10. Centre 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 unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

Awarding bodies will be contacted by the headteacher or examinations officer as soon as possible once GCHS is aware of the crisis.

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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Awarding organisation to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network.
- Centres would need to 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 and in the close collaboration with centre and regulators, awarding organisation to consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date.

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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- ▶ Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisation arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisation and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.
- For any examinations where centres make their own arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations.
- ▶ Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers 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.

- Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.
- ▶ Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisation candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.
- 14. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (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

- Distribution of results:
 - o GCHS to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.
 - o GCHS to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site.
 - Centres to share facilities with other centres if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation.
- Facilitation of post results services:
- ▶ GCHS to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location.
- ▶ GCHS to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results request are not possible.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

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...

2. Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises.

You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

3. Steps you should take

3.1 Exam planning

Review contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

3.2 In the event of disruption

- 1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- 2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- 3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- 4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- 5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination, please refer to JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure'.
- 6. Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- 7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

3.3 After the exam

- 1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.
- 2. Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- 3. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- 4. Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

4. Steps the awarding organisation should take

4.1 Exam planning

- 1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.
- 2. Ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

4.2 In the event of disruption

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.

- 2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
- 3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
- 4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event, which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- 5. Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

4.3 After the exam

Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students. For example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

5. If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.

Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects.

See also:

• ICQ's quidance on special considerations

6. Wider communications

The regulators, <u>Ofqual</u> in England, <u>Qualifications Wales</u> in Wales and <u>CCEA</u> in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The <u>Department for Education</u> in England, the <u>Department of Education</u> in Northern Ireland and the <u>Welsh Government</u> will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the <u>Universities and Colleges Admissions Service</u> (UCAS) and the <u>Central Applications Office</u> (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

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

7. Widespread national disruption

In the event of widespread sustained national disruption, the government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for exam timetables.

[Ofqual guidance extract above taken directly from the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted, (updated 02 March 2020) 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

ICO

15.1 The qualification regulators, JCQ and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

Further information may be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted

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 a 'contingency day' for examinations, summer 2021. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examsystem-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

The designation of a 'contingency day' 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 a national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2021, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort, the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it is agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the rescheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled dates 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 this contingency arrangement so that they may take it into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.

[]CQ guidance taken directly from JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2020-2021] 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 http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance on Alternative Site arrangements and Transferred Candidate arrangements

Instructions for Conducting Examinations http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

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

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Severe weather; Exam disruption https://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings

Opening and Closing local-authority-maintained schools www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organistation-maintained-schools

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

National Counter Terrorism Security Office

Procedures for handling bomb threats <u>www.gov.uk/government/publications/bomb-threats-guidance/procedures-for-handling-bomb-threats</u>