



South Thames Colleges Group

EXAM CONTINGENCY PLAN

Purpose of the plan

This plan sets out risks or issues that could potentially cause disruption to the exams process at STCG colleges. The intention is to mitigate the impact of any disruptions by specifying actions/procedures to be invoked in such circumstances.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by Ofqual's "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 to the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland".

This plan also confirms STCG is compliant with the JCQ regulation that a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration is in place. This will allow members of senior management to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process:

1. Head of Exams extended absence at key points in the exam cycle
2. Access Arrangement Assessor extended absence at key points in the exam cycle
3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle
4. Invigilators – lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence
5. Exam rooms – lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice
6. Failure of IT systems
7. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)
8. Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period
9. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open
10. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period
11. Disruption in the distribution of exam papers
12. Disruption to the transportation of completed exam scripts
13. Assessment material is not available to be marked
14. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

Policy Title: Exams & Assessments Policy – Contingency Plan	Staff Member Responsible: Assistant Principal - FE
Version: April 2020	Review Date: July 2021

Criteria for implementation of the plan	Actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
1. Exam officer extended absence at key points in the exam cycle	
<p>Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken which could include:</p> <p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Entries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Pre-exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invigilators not trained or updated on changes to instructions for conducting exams • exam timetabling, rooming allocation and invigilation schedules not prepared • candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates • confidential exam/assessment materials and candidates' work not stored under required secure conditions • internal assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators 	<p>Allocate resource from within the same or other Exams teams in the Group to provide short-term cover if possible</p> <p>Consider whether there is resource in Admin areas of the Group and allocate if possible</p> <p>Appoint temporary (agency) cover short-term</p> <p>Keep clear, accessible and up-to-date records of progress to date in each area</p> <p>For the summer exam period, have all planning and supporting paperwork ready at least a week in advance of exam dates</p>

<p>Exam time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Results and post-results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates • the facilitation of the post-results services 	
<p>2. Access Arrangement Assessor (or Exams staff) extended absence at key points in the exam cycle (Exams staff responsible for Pre-exams points 1 and 2)</p>	
<p>Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process not undertaken which could include:</p> <p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Pre-exams</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Exam time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for access arrangements not arranged 	<p>Allocate resource from within the same or other Learning Support teams in the Group to provide short-term cover if possible</p> <p>Consider whether there is resource in Admin areas of the Group and allocate if possible</p> <p>Appoint temporary (agency) cover short-term</p> <p>Keep clear, accessible and up-to-date records of progress to date in each area</p>

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle	
<p>Key tasks not undertaken which could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>Exams set and publish internal deadlines for all tasks which allow time for information to be researched and provided by others in the event of staff absence</p> <p>Heads of Section are aware of schedules and manage staff to complete key tasks, identifying and rectifying omissions in good time</p> <p>Staff are cross-trained to stand in for each other if necessary</p>
4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams • Invigilator shortage on peak exam days • Invigilator absence on the day of an exam 	<p>Exams carry out update training on new regulations in the autumn term for existing team of invigilators</p> <p>Exams train Learning Support and teaching staff annually to maintain a large bank of trained invigilators who can be called upon in emergencies</p> <p>Exams recruit to supplement bank of invigilators in the spring term and carry out training</p> <p>Timely detailed planning enables invigilator numbers to be correctly calculated and booked</p>
5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning • Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days 	<p>Planning starts late Feb after entries are made and room requirements are identified.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time 	<p>Exams liaise with Heads of Section to agree release of suitable rooms according to requirements well in advance of exam days; Exams check rooms for suitability</p> <p>Potential alternative venues identified in advance in case of need (i) other college sites within Group, e.g. Wandsworth/Tooting, Kingston main building/CIC (ii) other local sites (iii) public venues awarding bodies may be aware of (iv) exam and contact details kept off site for reference if necessary</p>
6. Failure of IT systems	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIS system failure at final entry deadline • MIS system failure during exams preparation • Online exams • MIS system failure at results release time 	<p>Entries made in advance of deadlines in case of last minute problems</p> <p>Consult awarding bodies on alternative methods for making exam entries and update them if there are ongoing issues</p> <p>Back-ups kept of all exam planning documents so they can be used on PCs outside the centre</p> <p>Online exams re-scheduled as soon as possible after the failure, awarding bodies informed</p> <p>Other locations identified from where results can be accessed on awarding body websites, printed and distributed to students, e.g. Wandsworth/Tooting or vice versa</p>
7. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)	
<p>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</p>	<p>Inform awarding bodies as soon as possible and seek their advice</p> <p>Follow advice and if necessary invoke national Exams Contingency Day</p> <p>Apply for special consideration</p> <p>Identify other locations where exams could be relocated</p>

8. Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period	
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	<p>Provide alternative online learning methods or additional teaching time to compensate</p> <p>For modular courses, advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series</p> <p>Seek advice from awarding bodies as to whether deadlines can be extended or special consideration can be applied</p>
9. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open	
Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal	<p>Liaise with awarding body and apply to move exams to an alternative site such as hospital, prison, if appropriate</p> <p>Apply for special consideration if eligible</p> <p>Postpone exams to a later series</p>
10. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)	
Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations	Potential alternative venues identified in advance in case of need (i) other college sites within Group, e.g. Wandsworth/Tooting, Kingston main building/CIC (ii) other local sites (iii) public venues awarding bodies may be aware of (iv) exam and contact details kept off site for reference if necessary
11. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers	
Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations	<p>Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network</p> <p>STCG college(s) ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions</p> <p>Awarding organisations provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances</p>

	As a last resort, and in close collaboration with the centre and regulators, awarding organisations would consider scheduling the exam on an alternative date
12. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts	
Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts	<p>Where examinations are part of the national ‘yellow label’ service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Centres to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection.</p>
13. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked	
Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked	<p>Awarding bodies to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding body</p> <p>Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series</p>
14. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)	
Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services	<p>Distribution of results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EO make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation • EO make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site • EO to share facilities with other colleges if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation. <p>Facilitation of post results services:</p>

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EO to make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location • EO to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post results requests are not possible |
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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 as part of your emergency planning and make sure your 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

Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.

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:

- [JCQ's guidance on special considerations](#)
- [FAB's guidance on special considerations](#)

6. Wider communications

The regulators, [Ofqual](#) in England, [Qualifications Wales](#) in Wales and [CCEA](#) in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The [Department for Education](#) in England, the [Department of Education](#) in Northern Ireland and the [Welsh Government](#) 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 [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#) (UCAS) and the [Central Applications Office](#) (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 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 23 January 2018) <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>]

JCQ

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 have designated Wednesday 24 June 2020 as a 'contingency day' for examinations. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

The designation of 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.

In the highly unlikely event that there is national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2020, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and the DfE 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 on 24 June 2020. Centres will be alerted if it was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of 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.

[JCQ guidance taken directly from JCQ *Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2019-2020* <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations>, section 15, **Contingency planning**]

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents>

General Regulations for Approved Centres <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>

Guidance notes on *alternative site* arrangements <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms>

Guidance notes concerning *transferred candidates* <http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms>

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-guidance>

GOV.UK

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

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

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>

Statutory guidance on school closures <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>

School closures <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-closures>