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**Examination Contingency Plan**

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**Written by:** Rachael Thompson, Director

Click or tap to enter a date.

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**Version:** 5

**This policy will be reviewed at least annually and/or following any updates to national and local guidance and procedures.**

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# Aims

1. This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Cairn Education. By outlining actions/ procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact of these disruptions have on our exam process.
2. Alongside internal process, this plan is informed by:

[Preparing for disruption to examinations - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/preparing-for-disruption-to-examinations/)

[Notice to Centres - exam contingency plan - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/)

1. This plan also confirms Cairn Education is compliant with JCQ regulations that the centre has in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will enable directors of Cairn Education to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence.

# Possible causes of disruption to the exam process:

# Head of Centre extended absence at key points in the exam process.

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

### 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/ assessments
* 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
* 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; 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

## Mitigating Actions

* In addition to the exam officer the lead invigilator (Gillian Winters) is also trained and capable of conducting assessments.
* The exams officer would ensure that access arrangements are carried out as required and identified at assessment.

# Exams Officer extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

### Criteria for implementation

Candidates not tested/ assessed to identify potential administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

### Planning

* Candidates not tested/ assessed to identify potential access arrangements 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 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.

### Mitigating Actions

* In addition to the Exams Officer the lead invigilator is also trained and capable of conducting assessments.
* In addition to the Exams Officer the Head of Centre would ensure that access arrangements are carried out as required and identified at assessment.
* The lead invigilator is one of the named key holders and is able to access exam materials in the event of the Exam Officer and Head of Centre being absent during the exam process.

# 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 bale to consider appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the centres marking.
* Internal assessment marks and candidates work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines.

### Mitigating Actions

* Where teaching staff are not available through extended absences the director will ensure all relevant actions are dealt with and staff absence is covered by a suitable and qualified replacement in the interim.

# 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.

### Mitigating Actions

* Cairn Education staff are all invigilator trained.

# Exam Rooms- lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice.

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

* Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time.

### Mitigating Actions

* It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre or Exam Officer (if Head of Centre is absent) to ensure an alternative exam venue is available for every exam series. The Exam Officer will inform the invigilator(s) and candidate(s) of any emergency change of venue and will ensure that the security and integrity of the exam process continues to be maintained at all times.
* Exams for January and March 2025 series are being held at an alternative site home address. In an emergency, if there are issues facilitating the exam at the alternative site location, the exam will be held in the exam room at centre site (Cairn education - Billy's Space, 63 Main Street, Staveley LA8 9LN).
* For June 2025 exam series, if the exams cannot be conducted at centre site, an alternative site will be available located within 500 feet of the centre site: The Pavilion, 77 Main St, Staveley, Kendal, LA8 9LN. The exam papers will need to be transported security as per alternative site arrangements for transporting exam papers (JCQ Instructions for Conducting Exams 2024-25, section 2: 11.4).

# 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

### Mitigating Actions

* In the event of MIS system failures the exam team would liaise directly with awarding bodies.

# Cyber-attack

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

* Exam data is compromised due to a cyber-attack.

### Mitigating Actions

* If centres experience a cyber-attack which impacts any learner data, assessment records or learner work, the exam officer needs to contact the awarding body immediately for advice and support.
* Students regularly undertake IT security training and are aware of the importance of creating strong unique passwords, keeping all account details secret, enabling additional security settings where possible, updating any passwords which may have been exposed and how to set up secure account recovery options.
* The school has a strong firewall system.
* Exam officer to ensure that all centre exam staff are aware and feel confident implementing key cyber security procedures identified in The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) guidance <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/education-skills/cyber-security-schools>.

# 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.

### Mitigating Actions

* School follows exam procedure for dealing with crisis event during an exam. E.g. during a fire alarm, candidates are marshalled to safety point and kept isolated from each other and if safe to do so and necessary, candidates are re-seated in new accommodation on same site in similar seating arrangement where possible.
* In an emergency situation where the secure room and the secure storage facility cannot be accessed and the centre will need to invoke a contingency arrangement, the JCQ Centre Inspection Service must be contacted immediately by the Head of Centre.

# Disruption of teaching time- school closed for an extended period

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

* School is 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, and where online study hasn’t ameliorated the loss of teaching time.

### Mitigating Actions

* Director to agree a course of action this could involve the opportunity for candidates to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
* The exam officer will see if the examination can be sat at an alternative venue. Guidance on emergency planning, with advice on severe weather is available on the Department for Education Website. [Emergency planning and response - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings#exam-disruption)
* Seek advice from awarding organisations and JCQ.
* Communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential for disruption to teaching time and create individual plans to address this.
* Online learning contingency plan.

# Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis (school remains open)

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

* Candidates are unable to attend school to take examinations due to unforeseen crisis event.

### Mitigating Actions

* School to liaise with awarding organisation to agree delay of start of exam, candidate monitored and isolated in line with awarding organisation agreed instructions.
* School to liaise with the candidate to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations.
* School to offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
* The school can apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements. Candidates are only eligible if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control. JCQ guidance on special circumstances can be accessed through the JCQ website. [Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/)

# Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to school in advance of examinations

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

* Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to school in advance of examinations.

### Mitigating Actions

* See <https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Disruption_Planning_FINAL.pdf>
* The exams officer would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under exam conditions.
* The exams officer to check exam papers are on site 24 hours preceding exam.

# Disruption to the transportation of completed examination papers.

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

* Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts.

### Mitigating Actions

* School to ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection.
* School to seek advice from the awarding organisation and collection agency regarding collection.
* Communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers.

Arrange with the exam boards for alternative means of receiving papers e.g. electronically or alternative courier.

* See [Notice to Centres - exam contingency plan - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/)

# Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

* If due to large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/ assessment evidence before it can be marked.

### Mitigating Actions

* Exam officer to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisations, candidates and their parents and carers
* NSAC should 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.
* The candidate should retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window.

# Disruption to the scanning process- where completed examination scripts are being scanned for on screen marking.

### Criteria for implementation of the plan

* In the event that there is disruption to the scanning process.

### Mitigating Actions

* Awarding organisations implement their existing contingency plans for disruption to on-screen marking process.
* Revert to traditional forms of marking, recruit, train or re-standardise qualified new markers.

# Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

* If due to large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/ assessment evidence before it can be marked.

Mitigating Actions

* Communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisations, candidates and their parents and carers
* Cairn Education should 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.
* The candidate should retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window.

# Markers unable to mark examination scripts according to marking schedules.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

* In the event that a significant number of markers are unable to mark examination scripts, resulting in a risk to the delivery by scheduled dates.

Mitigating Actions

* Relocate script to available markers.
* Recruit, train or re-standardise qualified new markers.
* Contact each other to share markers for specific qualifications.
* Prioritise marking based on results dates, qualifications that require further study (e.g. Maths and English).

# Difficulty meeting planned scheduled or unable to issue results.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

* In the event that an awarding organisation is unable to meet a planned schedule for issuing results due to a catastrophic process or systems failure.

Mitigating Actions

* Establish priorities for processing results.
* In consultation with regulators, assess the level of disruption and consider alternative options for issuing results, dependent upon the nature of the issue.
* In consultation with regulators, liaise with relevant organisations regarding candidate progression into further education.

# Awarding organisations unable to issue accurate results.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

* In the event of a catastrophic system error, failure or attack on systems means a significant number of results cannot be validated as accurate, or are issue and found to be inaccurate.

Mitigating Actions

* Revalidate the results.
* Reissue the results, via an alternative format if necessary.

# School unable to distribute results are normal

Criteria for implementation of the plan

* School are unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post results service.

Mitigating Actions

* School to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site.
* School to make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative site (or though access of computerised systems).
* School to share facilities with others if this is possible.
* Contact awarding organisations about alternative options.

# Awarding organisation are unable to offer post results service.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

* In the event that awarding organisations are not able to provide a postal results service, with school and candidates unable to access services such as enquiries about results and appeals.

Mitigating Actions

* Exam officer to make arrangements to provide postal results services for schools and candidates through alternative methods.

**Exam Contingency Plan Flow Chart 2024/25**

Key holders: Rachael Thompson, Head of Centre

The examination policy includes a detailed account of the roles and responsibilities of the Head of Centre, Exam Officer and Invigilators.

Natasha Colahan, Exams Officer

Gillian Winters, Lead Invigilator

If Rachael Thompson is absent during a critical stage of the examination cycle.

Natasha Colahan is responsible for all tasks involved in the exam process including pre-exam (e.g. entries), during exams and post-exam processes. Natasha Colahan to contact the awarding bodies for advice on completing tasks which require the Head of Centre. If key decisions need to be made, Natasha Colahan will run these by Cairn Education’s governing body.

The Cairn Education governing body will need to review whether it will be possible to facilitate the exams, considering the possibility of appointing new key holder(s). Cairn Education governing body will need to advise awarding bodies of the situation.

Gillian Winters is responsible for all tasks involved in the exam process including pre-exam (e.g. entries), during exams and post-exam processes. Natasha Colahan to ensure that Gillian is trained in the exam process if this situation occurs. Gillian will need to contact awarding bodies to explain the situation and seek additional guidance where required. Gillian Winters to contact Cairn Education governing body to advise of the situation.

If Natasha Colahan is absent during a critical stage of the examination cycle.

Rachael Thompson takes responsibility for facilitation of all tasks involved in the exam process including pre-exam (e.g. entries), during exams and post-exam processes. Rachael Thompson will support Gillian Winters to complete tasks she is unable to undertake due to being head of centre.

If Natasha Colahan and Rachael Thompson are absent during a critical stage of the examination cycle.

If Natasha Colahan, Rachael Thompson and Gillian Winters are absent during a critical stage of the examination cycle.