



Exam Contingency Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Summary:

This policy aims examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process.

Date of next review:

November 2026

Additional Notes

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PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process at Hazelwood Integrated College. By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption, it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions may have on our exam process.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by scenarios contained in the Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland where it is stated that *“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”*.

This plan complies with JCQ general regulations (page 15) in that:

The centre agrees to have 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 examinations officer be absent at a crucial stage of the examination cycle.

CAUSES OF POTENTIAL DISRUPTION TO THE EXAM PROCESS

1) Examinations Officer’s 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 and trained

Entries

- awarding bodies not being informed of early/estimated entries which prompts release of early information required by teaching staff
- candidates not being entered with awarding bodies for external exams/assessment
- awarding body entry deadlines missed or late or other penalty fees being incurred

Pre-exams

- exam timetabling, rooming allocation, and invigilation schedules not prepared
- candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
- exam/assessment materials and candidates’ work not stored under required secure conditions
- internal assessment marks and samples of candidates’ work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators

Exam time

- exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies

- required reports/requests not submitted to awarding bodies during exam/assessment periods (e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special considerations)
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required to awarding bodies
- results and post-results
- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates
- facilitation of post-results services

Centre actions:

- SLT to nominate a "deputy" to cover the role/task (i.e. Mrs Bronagh McLaughlin as Examinations Manager or Mrs Emma Lamont as Assistant Examinations Officer). Extra help could be called on from Chief Invigilator Mrs Brona Young with support given by the Assistant Principal for Curriculum, Miss Tracy Beare. Extra hours should be allocated to the "deputy" to ensure there are sufficient hours to cover the work required. Relief staff to be given access to secure storage procedures with usernames and passwords for the exam websites.
- Long term absences to be reported to the exam boards so they are aware of the situation and can offer guidance and support.

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
- 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:

- The Principal to nominate a "deputy" to cover the role/task as the Head of Centre (i.e. Assistant SENCo Miss Grainne McCormick, Learning Mentors).
- Presently, our Qualified Assessor to test candidates is Mrs Carol Jordan who would continue in this role in the absence of the SENCo.
- Learning Mentors and Qualified Assessor to arrange student support during all exams.

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
- internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines

Centre actions:

- HoDs/HoFs should take responsibility for any missing entries, coursework marks and any assessment marks in the absence of a member of staff. They will also brief new staff (cover staff) within the department on arrangements for assessment and examinations. Entries must be made on time to meet deadlines and avoid late fees. Amendments can always be made at a later date to confirm final entries.

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:

- New invigilators undergo training by the Examinations Officer and through the exam board. All invigilators should be competent and confident in processes and procedures.
- Annual training sessions to be held for all invigilators in Term 1 of the academic year by the Examinations Officer in order to refresh their knowledge and communicate JCQ regulation changes and update local information. Hazelwood College retains a pool of approximately 70 invigilators from within their school staffing (including CAs and technicians).
- Other invigilators will be accessed from our pool of staff.
- As a last resort, SLT will be asked to invigilate.

5) Exam rooms – lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Examinations 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:

- A clear rooming plan for exams should be determined at the beginning of the academic year.
Default exam rooms – Cedar Lodge mobile classrooms for small numbers of students sitting exams.

- Room bookings must be made early enough in advance to ensure there are sufficient rooms for exam students.
- If there is an emergency on the day, the free rooms must be checked first (SIMS) and moves made accordingly. SLT to be contacted.
- If a bigger venue is required, HIC will contact and liaise with the Exams Officers at Edmund Rice College, Glengormley and Belfast Model School for Girls to use their halls for examination purposes. This arrangement is part of the Inter-School Exam Facility Agreement as drafted by the North Belfast Area Learning Community. Any additional resources that are required will be transported by our caretaking team (i.e. tables, chairs, etc.) and all examination procedures adhered to in line with JCQ guidance.

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
- cyber attack

Centre actions:

- All exam entries should be made well in advance of the deadline to avoid this issue in the first place. If the entries are left to the last minute and there is an IT failure, firstly the Examinations Officer will ring the relevant exam boards to explain (this may allow the College an extension).
- In the event of IT failure, SIMS will be accessed through a Standalone computer.
- Our Network Manager (Mr Brendan Flood) will deal with any ICT issues that arise.
- C2k will be contacted to advise the centre and investigate in the instance of a cyber attack which jeopardises the administration of exams. The Examinations Officer will ring the relevant exam boards to explain the matter at hand.
- CCEA MIA onscreen exams may be accessed via one Standalone computer and distributed manually to students.

7) 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

The centre is to communicate with parents, carers and students about the potential for disruption to teaching time and plans to address this.

Centre actions:

- In the event of the Centre not being able to open as normal, appropriate communication with the relevant awarding bodies will be undertaken by the Examinations Officer. Hazelwood will contact and liaise with the Exams Officers at Edmund Rice College, Glengormley and Belfast Model School for Girls with the aim of using their halls for examination purposes. This arrangement is part of the Inter-School Exam Facility Agreement as drafted by the North Belfast Area Learning Community. In such instances, details will be communicated to candidates via the

school's website, parent text and social media accounts by relevant personnel. Staff involved in exams (including invigilators) will be contacted by email, telephone and text.

8) 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

The centre to communicate with relevant awarding organisations at the outset to make them aware of the issue. The centre to communicate with parents, carers and candidates regarding solutions to the issue.

Centre actions:

- The Centre will liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations (home, hospital, alternative centre – refer to aforementioned Area Learning Community agreement).
- The Centre, if appropriate, can offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- The Centre will apply to the awarding organisation for special considerations for candidates where they have met the requirements. Candidates are only eligible for special considerations if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse conditions beyond their control. If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination for other reasons, they will be made aware that the special considerations rules will not apply.

9) 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

A centre which is unable to open as normal for examinations must inform each awarding organisation with which examinations are due to be taken as soon as is possible.

Centre actions:

- The Centre will be open if possible for examinations and exam candidates only.
- The Centre will use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. schools in aforementioned Area Learning Community agreement). All arrangements will be agreed with the awarding body before being actioned.
- The Centre may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series with permission from the awarding bodies.
- In such instances, details will be communicated to candidates via the school's website, parent text and social media accounts by relevant personnel. Staff involved in exams (including invigilators) will be contacted by email, telephone and text.
- Special considerations to be considered for whole cohort.

10) 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

The centre to communicate with awarding organisations to organise alternative delivery of papers.

Centre actions:

- The Centre will check all exam papers upon arrival in school and will alert the appropriate awarding bodies of any discrepancies.
- If this happens on the day of the exam, the exam board will be contacted immediately by the Examinations Officer. Awarding organisations can provide centres with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network or faxed if electronic transfer is not possible.
- The Examinations Officer will ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions.

11) Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

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

Centre actions:

- The Centre will seek advice from the awarding organisations and normal collection agency regarding collection. No arrangements for transportation will be made without the approval of the awarding organisation.
- The Centre will ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection (safely stored in the secure Examinations Office). If this is not accessible, they will be stored in the safe in the general office.

12) 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 exam scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding bodies

It is the responsibility of the Head of Centre to communicate this immediately to the relevant awarding organisation(s) and subsequently to students and their parents or carers.

Centre actions:

- Notify awarding bodies immediately for further advice or instructions.
- The awarding organisations will generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations.
- Candidates will retake affected assessments at subsequent assessment windows.

13) Centre unable to distribute results as normal

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre is unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services

Centres to contact awarding organisations about alternative options [JCP scenario 11].

Centre actions:

- The Centre distributes the results as normal via collection by the learner. Where learners do not collect results in person, these will be distributed via post.

Causes 7-13 – All scenarios, criteria and specific communications have been taken directly from the *Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

Senior Designated Contact for Emergency Exam Requests in the Summer

Hazelwood Integrated College's Senior Designated Contact who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays is primarily the Vice Principal for Senior School, Mr Peter Thompson. However, this responsibility may fall onto the Examinations Manager/Curriculum Operations Manager, Mrs Bronagh McLaughlin.

FURTHER GUIDANCE TO INFORM AND IMPLEMENT CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Ofqual

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

<file:///N:/Downloads/4-5-1-Joint-Contingency-Plan-April-2019.pdf>

JCQ

General Regulations

<http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations>

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

Emergencies and severe weather: schools and early years settings

<https://www.gov.uk/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/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/dispatch-of-exam-scripts-guide>