Altrincham College

Joint Exam Contingency Plan 2026 – 2027

(JCQ & Altrincham College)

Policy Date:	**September 2026**
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Key staff involved in Contingency Planning

Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre	**Mr Andrew Keegan**
Exams Officer Line Manager	**Mrs Beth Maher / Mr Chris Tyrer**
Exams Officer	**Mrs Lisa Pearson**
Assistant Exams Officer	**Mrs Beth Maher / Mr James Smith**
ALS Lead/SENDCo	**Mrs Nicola Owen**
Senior Leader(s)	**Mr Andrew Eastwood / Mr Chris Tyrer**

Purpose of the Plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exams process at Altrincham College. 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, 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 Altrincham College is compliant with the JCQ regulation (section 5.3, General Regulations for Approved Centres 2026-27 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 (Exam Spreadsheet)

- *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 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*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Assistant Exams officer – Beth Maher and/or James Smith to cover Exams officer's absence.
- Additional help - current Senior Invigilator Francesca Jones-Ball or experienced invigilator Julie Maxfield.
- Beth Maher & James Smith have secure access to storage, username and passwords for staff network and Exam Board websites.
- Mr Andy Eastwood and/or Mr Chris Tyrer to support Beth Maher and/or James Smith.

2. SENDCo 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 is not arranged for exam rooms*

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- SLT to nominate a 'Deputy' to cover the role; Zoe Crowder, Felicity Elliott-Samuels or Kathryn Wood
- SLT to appoint or outsource a qualified assessor to test candidates for forth-coming external exams
- SLT to arrange student support during all exams
- Exams officer to speak to Awarding Organisation if arrangements cannot be put in place in time for external 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

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

- Heads of Departments to take responsibility for any missing entries and non-assessment marks and procedures in the absence of a member of staff
- Exams officer to inform the relevant Exam Board if any work is missing, candidates have not been entered correctly or a procedure has not been adhered to due to absence
- Entries to be made on time to avoid late fees; amendments to be made at a later date if required.

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

- Check availability of other invigilators
- Check with SENDCo for any Learning Support staff who may be available
- Contact Exams Officer for available staff – train them before any invigilation starts
- Check to see if it is possible to amalgamate any access arrangement rooms to release invigilators
- SLT to invigilate if possible – training given before first invigilation slot
- Supervise candidates who are able to sit the exam later in the day with permission from AO

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable.

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 bookings to be made in advance to ensure there are sufficient rooms for exam students
- Contact cover manager for any available rooms
- Update seating plans and inform students to avoid late candidates
- Ensure additional exam rooms have posters and signage
- If no possible rooms, supervise candidates and remove devices. Plan to seat the candidates to take the exam later: Contact the Awarding Organisation/Exam Board
- Utilise any rooms in school that aren't affected as the main halls
- Consider sending home Y.7 & Y.8 lower school pupils to make rooms available
- Refer to SLT for further advice if needed

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- All exams entries should be made well in advance of the deadline to avoid the issue. If the entries are left to the last minute and there is an IT failure, firstly ring the relevant Exam Board to explain the situation: an extension may be given
- Ensure paperwork is printed in advance i.e. seating plans and Access Arrangements
- Try to access Sims through another computer i.e. from home
- Inform IT support of the pre-release results days and results days to ensure no updates or changes to the system are planned and a member of IT is available
- Ensure all Exam Board passwords are kept non-electronically
- Keep IT managers phone number non-electronically in case of emergency contact

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

- Ensure invigilators are aware of the difference between the bells for a lock down and evacuation
- Invigilators to follow the procedure in the exam room packs: this is communicated to them in the mock and external exam training sessions
- Advise candidates to leave all papers and follow the invigilators to the relevant meeting points if they are to be evacuated
- Candidates to be supervised throughout the evacuation and all timings to be recorded
- Exams officer to inform the relevant Exam Board of the incident

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

- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, Altrincham College remains responsible in the preparation of students, as usual, for examinations.
- In the case of modular courses, Altrincham College may advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series.
- If the school was closed or a Year Group taking examinations was absent from school due to a lockdown, teachers would utilise online learning through Class Charts and Microsoft Teams meetings to deliver course content
- Practical elements of qualifications would be managed in line with guidance from Awarding Organisations

Any students not completing tasks set on Class Charts or Teams meetings would be followed up by form tutors and the relevant year team

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- centre to liaise with candidates to identify whether the examination can be sat at an alternative venue in agreement with the relevant awarding organisations.
- centre to offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- centre to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements. Candidates are only eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but are affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.
- If a candidate chooses not to sit an examination for other reasons they should be aware that special consideration rules will not apply.

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

- Centre to open for examinations and candidates only, if possible.
- Supervise candidates until a decision can be made
- Stagger exams within the venue available
- Centre to use alternative venues in agreement with relevant awarding organisations (e.g. share facilities with other centres or use other public building, if possible). Possible venues are: St Ambrose School, Wellington School or Blessed Thomas Holford School.
- Centre may offer candidates an opportunity to sit any examinations missed at the next available series.
- Centre to apply to awarding organisations for special consideration for candidates where they have met the minimum requirements.
- Awarding organisations 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.

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

- Contact the Exam Board and request the paper electronically
- Ensure reprographics are available to free up machines to print papers
- Ensure no staff are in reprographics when the paper is being printed and ensure the security of all papers around the site – the papers should be in sealed envelopes
- Make arrangement to supervise candidates if the exam cannot start on time
- To consider the scheduling of the examination on an alternative date
- Enlist additional invigilators for support

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

- In the first instance centres to seek advice from awarding organisations and normal collection agency regarding collection. The School should not make their own arrangements for transportation without approval from awarding organisations.
- Centre must ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection.
- All exams scripts must be stored in the secure Exams Office.

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Notify awarding organisation immediately.
- Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding organisations
- Candidates to retake affected assessment at subsequent assessment window.
- 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 organisations candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series.

14. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

(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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- centre to notify Awarding Organisation.
- centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site if the Altrincham College site cannot be accessed: i.e. St Ambrose School, Wellington Road School or Blessed Thomas Halford school.
- centre to make all arrangements to coordinate access to post result services from an alternative site as above.
- centre to share facilities with other centres if this is possible.

15. Internal Governance arrangements

As stated in the JCQ General Regulations for Approved Centres 2026-27 (page 16: 5.3)

d) has in place a written escalation process should the head of centre, or member of the senior leadership team with oversight of examination and assessment administration, be absent;

e) has in place a member of the senior leadership team who has a good working knowledge of the examination system, will provide effective line management support and supervision of the examinations officer to ensure that the integrity and security of examinations and assessments are maintained throughout an examination series.

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Mr Andrew Keegan - Headteacher has senior leadership responsibility for overseeing all examination processes, having held the role since January 2026.

In the event of Mr Keegan's absence the following escalation process will be implemented by the Exams department:

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption

- Mrs Beth Maher - Data Manager & Data Protection officer - to be consulted if problems arise with any data or systems i.e. Exams organiser (SIMS)
- Mr James Smith – IT Network manager to be consulted it problems continue and not resolved immediately
- In Mrs Maher absence Mr Andrew Eastwood and/or Mr Chris Tyrer – Deputy Headteacher to be consulted
- Mr Andrew Eastwood and/or Mr Chris Tyrer – Deputy Headteacher(s) to be consulted in matters related to malpractice, candidates, invigilation and any other exam related matters which arise.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

Ofqual

1. 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, depending on their specific policies.

See also:

- JCQ's guidance on special considerations

2. 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.

3. 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 examinations and assessments, including 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 07 May 2024) 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

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

15.1

The qualification regulators, awarding bodies 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

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 or bodies.

15.3

All centres must have 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 where the head of centre, exams officer or SENCo is absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency.

All relevant centre staff must be familiar with the examination contingency 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

If the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the centre's contingency plan must be invoked, utilising the centre's alternative site(s) and the relevant awarding bodies 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 'contingency sessions' for summer examinations. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

15.6

The designation of 'contingency sessions' within the common examination timetable is for use in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

15.7

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in a summer series, 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 last 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 date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

15.8

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading. Centres must, therefore, ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they take them into account when making their plans for the summer

(JCQ guidance above taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2026-2027 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 www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations

Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

Guidance notes for transferred candidates www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms

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

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

GOV.UK

Emergency planning and response: Severe weather; Exam disruption 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-organisation-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

Wales

School closures – examinations gov.wales/school-closures-examinations

Opening schools in extremely bad weather gov.wales/opening-schools-extremely-bad-weather-guidance-schools

Northern Ireland

Exceptional closure days www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/exceptional-closure-days

Checklist for Principals when considering Opening or Closure of School www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/checklist-exceptional-closure-schools

School closures www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/school-closures

National Counter Terrorism Security Office

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