



Exam Contingency Policy 2026-27

POLICY FOR	Exam Contingency
PERSON RESPONSIBLE	Academic Team / Examination Officer
REVIEWED BY	Assistant Principals and Head of School
APPROVED DATE	June 2026
REVIEW DATE	June 2026
APPROVED BY	Executive Principal / CEO and Head of School/Deputy CEO
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW	May 2027
RELATED POLICIES	Teaching and Learning Policy, Assessment Policy

Executive Principal / CEO and Brand
Ambassador for GEMS Westminster Schools



Purpose of the plan

This Examination Contingency Plan outlines procedures to manage potential risks or disruptions that may affect the smooth conduct of examinations at The Westminster School, Dubai. The aim is to minimise the impact of unforeseen events and ensure the continuity and integrity of the examination process.

The plan is guided by the school's internal procedures and aligns with JCQ regulations, including the Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System and the document "Preparing for disruption to examinations" (effective from 1 September 2023).

This plan enables members of the Senior Leadership Team to take immediate action during emergencies, particularly if the Head of Centre or Examinations Officer is unavailable at a critical stage of the examination cycle. It also outlines procedures to be followed if the examination centre becomes unavailable, including during examinations or on results day, due to unforeseen circumstances such as emergencies or cyber-attacks.

The Head of Centre will ensure that a designated senior member of staff is available as a contingency contact for awarding bodies, including providing relevant contact details if required. This enables urgent matters affecting candidates or qualification awards, particularly those arising outside term time, to be addressed promptly. The designated staff member will have the authority to mobilise necessary resources and resolve issues within the centre if required.

Exams officer's absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Exams Officer's Absence at a Critical Stage of the Exam Cycle

This contingency plan will be implemented if the **Exams Officer is absent during a critical stage of the examination cycle**, resulting in key examination management tasks not being completed.

Planning:

- Failure to conduct the **annual data collection for qualifications**.
- Prepare the **annual exams plan**
- **Recruit sufficient invigilators**.

Entries:

- Failure to **submit early/estimated entries**,
- Register candidates with awarding bodies, OR
- Meet **entry deadlines**, potentially resulting in late fees or penalties.

Pre-Examination Preparation:

- Failure to **train invigilators**,
- Prepare **exam timetables**,

Room allocations, and invigilation schedules,

- Brief candidates on examination arrangements,
- Maintain **secure storage of confidential materials**, OR
- Submit **internal assessment marks and samples** to awarding bodies.

Exam time: During Examinations:

Failure to conduct exams under awarding body regulations, submit required reports (e.g., late arrivals, suspected malpractice, special consideration), or dispatch candidates' exam scripts to awarding bodies.

- Exams or assessments not conducted in accordance with awarding body regulations.
- Required reports or requests (e.g., very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration) not submitted to awarding bodies during the exam/assessment period.
- Candidates' scripts not dispatched to awarding bodies as required.

Results and post-results:

Failure to ensure secure access to examination results or manage post-results services such as reviews or enquiries.

In such situations, the Senior Leadership Team will implement the contingency procedures to ensure continuity of the examination process.

- Disruption to access examination results, affecting the timely distribution of results to candidates.
- Disruption to the facilitation of post-results services.

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption outlined above

Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact of Disruption

To ensure continuity of the examination process in the absence of the Exams Officer, the centre will:

- Assign the Deputy Examinations Officer or Data Leader to cover essential duties if the Exams Officer is temporarily unable to perform their role.
- Appoint an Agency Examinations Officer, if required, through the Senior Leadership Team in the event of a long-term absence.

1. SENDCo extended absence at a critical stage in the exam process (exam cycle)

SENDCo Extended Absence at a Critical Stage 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: The plan will be activated if key responsibilities related to the management and administration of **Access Arrangements** are not carried out, including:

Planning

- Candidates not assessed to identify potential access arrangement needs.
- Evidence of need and normal way of working not collected.

Pre-Exams

- Access arrangement approvals not applied for with the awarding body.
- Centre-delegated arrangements not implemented.
- Modified papers not identified and ordered within required deadlines.
- Staff/facilitators required to support candidates not allocated or trained.

During Exams

- Appropriate support arrangements for candidates with approved access arrangements not provided in exam rooms.

Other Criteria

- No additional criteria identified.
- Access arrangement candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

Other criteria

Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact

The centre will:

- Ensure the **Exams Officer is trained in all aspects of Access Arrangements.**
- Assign the **Inclusion Manager to oversee responsibilities in the absence of the SENDCo.**

2. Teaching staff extended absence at a critical point in the exam process (exam cycle)

Teaching Staff Extended Absence at a Critical Stage in the Exam Cycle

Criteria for Implementation of the Plan

The plan will be implemented if key examination-related responsibilities are not completed due to the extended absence of teaching staff, including:

- Early or estimated entry information not provided to the Exams Officer on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- **Final entry information** not submitted within the required timeline, leading to candidates not being entered for examinations/assessments or being entered late, potentially incurring penalty fees from awarding bodies.
- **Non-Examination Assessment (NEA)** tasks not set, issued, or completed by candidates as scheduled.
- **Candidates not being informed of their centre-assessed marks** before submission to the awarding body, limiting their opportunity to request a review of the centre's marking or appeal internal assessment decisions.

Internal assessment marks and candidate work not submitted within awarding body deadlines.

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact of Disruption

The centre will:

- **SLT will nominate a Deputy** to take responsibility for specific roles or tasks where required.
- **Subject Leaders will have a designated Deputy** to provide support and ensure continuity of responsibilities if needed.

3. Invigilators - Lack of Appropriately Trained Invigilators or Invigilator absence

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Insufficient recruitment or training of invigilators required to conduct examinations.
- Shortage of invigilators during peak examination days.
- Invigilator absence on the day of an exam.

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre Actions to Mitigate the Impact of the Disruption Listed Above

The centre will:

- Ensure the **Exams Officer provides appropriate training** to all members of the invigilation team.
- Ensure the **Exams Officer maintains sufficient invigilator staffing** to provide full coverage for all exam rooms.
- Use **agency invigilators as a contingency** in the event of a significant shortage.

4. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Exams officer unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning. The Exams Officer is unable to identify sufficient or appropriate rooms during exam timetable planning.
- Insufficient rooms are available on peak exam days
- Main exam venues become unavailable due to an unexpected incident during the examination period.

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Where the main exam venue(s) become unavailable due to an unexpected incident, utilise alternative rooms within the centre wherever possible, prioritising candidates whose progression would be significantly impacted if they do not sit the exam or assessment as scheduled.
- Explore the possibility of conducting the exam or assessment at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body.
- Where required, relocate to an external alternative venue, ensuring priority is given to candidates whose progression would be delayed if the exam or assessment does not take place as planned.

Alternative

- Inform candidates (and, where appropriate, parents/carers) of any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or venue.

Communication details:

- Send a text message to all parents.
- Send an email to all parents.
- Ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
- After the exam, consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.

Other centre actions:

- Exams Officer to liaise with SLT lead to source alternative venues and facilities
- Data Manager to assist with room bookings if necessary.

5. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of exam delivery
- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate disruption

The Centre will:

- Have back up data
- Protect against malware
- Keep technological devices safe
- Use passwords to protect data
- Avoid phishing attacks

The centre will ensure:

- All staff complete the mandatory GEMS U Course on Information Security Awareness.
- All staff receive Information Security Alerts from the GEMS Information Security Advisory.
- Question papers are downloaded 90 minutes prior to the exam and verified through a double-check process.
- All board compliance requirements are fully met.

6. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- MIS/IT system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS/IT system failure during exams preparation
- MIS/IT system failure at results release time
- Cyber Attack - Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of exam delivery

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Set internal entry deadlines ahead of the final deadline to allow for any potential IT system failures
- Ensure all exam preparations are completed in advance so that any IT issues on exam days do not disrupt proceedings.
- Access results through an alternative format or a separate computer not connected to the school network, if required.

- Liaise closely with IT department

7. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Refer to and invoke its (exams) emergency evacuation policy/procedure in line with JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure (or its (exams) lockdown policy)
- Contact the relevant awarding body at the earliest opportunity and follow its instructions
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression would be significantly affected if they do not sit the exam or assessment as scheduled.
- After the exam, assess whether any candidate's ability to complete the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.

Other centre actions:

- No other actions identified

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

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Recognise it remains the responsibility of the centre to prepare students, as usual, for examinations • facilitate alternative methods of learning
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) information relating to alternative methods of learning

Communication details:

- Information provided via the school website
- Information provided by letter to all parents/carers/students
- Take advice offered by the awarding body regarding alternative arrangements for conducting examinations that may be available

- Take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- Advise candidates, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.

Other centre actions:

- No other actions identified

9. Candidates may not be able to take examinations - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Take advice offered by the awarding body on the options for candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations
- Discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if a candidate misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the candidate's control
- Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be conducted at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Communication details:

- Communicate relevant information to students via the school website, DPR, and letters to parents.
- Consider whether any candidate's ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.

Other centre actions:

- No other actions identified

10. Centre may not be able to open as normal during the examination period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether the centre is able to open
- Contact the relevant awarding body as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- discuss alternative arrangements with the awarding body if the exam or assessment cannot take place
- Follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- Alternative venue to be confirmed.
- If alternative arrangements are to be made then we will notify the JCQ Centre Inspection Service by submitting the JCQ Alternative site form online using CAP.

Communication details:

- Information to be communicated to students 'via the school website, DPR and letters to parents.
- Consider whether any candidates' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration

Other centre actions:

- No other actions identified

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

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Liaise with awarding bodies regarding the provision of electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network and will ensure when copies are received/made, these are stored under secure conditions
- Follow guidance provided by the awarding body on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances.
- Understand that as a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations will consider scheduling of the examination on an alternative date.
- Communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.

Other centre actions:

- No other actions identified

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

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Where examinations are part of the national “yellow label” service, or where awarding bodies arrange collections, seek advice from the awarding body and do not make independent transport arrangements unless instructed to do so.

- For examinations where the centre arranges its own transportation, identify alternative dispatch options that comply with JCQ’s *Instructions for Conducting Examinations*.
- Ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

Other centre actions:

- Not Applicable

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.

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption liked above

The centre will:

- Liaise with the awarding body to determine whether candidate marks for affected assessments can be generated based on other appropriate evidence of achievement, in line with awarding body guidelines.
- Where marks cannot be generated by awarding body, inform candidates they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

Other centre actions:

- No other actions identified

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) or facilitate post-results services

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

Other criteria:

- No other criteria identified

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue share facilities with another centre if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- Make arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative venue

Alternative venue details: To be confirmed

- Make arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative location.
- Contact the relevant awarding body if electronic post results requests are not possible.
- Inform candidates of any alternative arrangements in place for the distribution of results and the facilitation of post results services.

Communication details:

- Parents will be updated in the school website/text message sent home with link

Other centre actions:

- No other actions identified

15. Any other cause of disruption to the exam process

Cause of disruption

- No further causes identified

Central actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

Not applicable

Upon review in September 2023, no centre-specific updates or changes were applicable to this document.

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

DfE

Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges

Cyber Security Standards in schools and colleges

www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-standards-for-schools-and-colleges)

Cyber-crime and cyber security: a guide for education providers

www.gov.uk/government/publications/indicators-of-potential-fraud-learning-institutions/guide-on-cyber-crime-and-cyber-security-for-education-providers)

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.

You may also wish to see the JCQ's notice to centres on exam contingency plans (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations/notice-to-centres--exam-contingency-plan/) and

JCQ's notice on preparing for disruption to examinations

(www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/preparing-for-disruption-to-examinations/) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for qualifications within its scope.

Steps you should take

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.

In the event of disruption

- Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
- Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
- 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.
- Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
- In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/).
- Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
- Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

- 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.
- Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
- Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
- 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.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

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.

In the event of disruption

- Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
- Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
- 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).
- Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
- Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

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.

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.