



Examinations Contingency Policy 25/26

Last reviewed: Feb 2026

Next review due: Feb 2027

We do things differently.....

H.E.R.E

High Standards
Empathy
Resilience
Emotional Response

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Purpose

This plan identifies risks that could disrupt examinations and assessments and sets out the actions Arbour Academy will take to minimise impact on candidates, maintain the integrity of qualifications, and ensure compliance with JCQ General Regulations 2025–26 and awarding body requirements.

This plan is informed by:

- Ofqual/NICCEA Joint Contingency Plan (last updated 7 May 2024) and the associated

- guidance on what centres should do if exams are seriously disrupted
- JCQ “Preparing for disruption to examinations” notice
- Ofqual Guidance on collecting evidence of student performance (resilience arrangements) (updated 4 March 2025)
- JCQ ICE 2025/26 (including emergency arrangements expectations)

JCQ compliance statement

The Head of Centre ensures the centre has:

- A written examinations policy/contingency plan covering exam administration, including succession arrangements for key staff involved in exam and assessment administration.
- Appropriate arrangements to manage disruption where the centre is unavailable for exams, and for emergency situations affecting exam rooms.
- Robust IT/cyber security arrangements to protect exam-related systems and data.

Roles and succession (minimum expectations)

Head of Centre

- Overall accountability; authorises emergency decisions (alternative site, timetable changes, communications).

Exams Officer (EO)

- Day-to-day exam administration.

SLT Link – Exams (Deputy EO)

- Trained to cover EO duties during absence; has access to secure storage; understands key awarding body portals and deadlines.

SENDSCO / Access Arrangements Lead

- Maintains access arrangements processes and ensures arrangements are in place and delivered.

IT Manager / Network Lead

- Leads incident response for MIS/exam’s software, secure downloads, A2C and cyber incidents.

Site Manager

- Supports venue availability, emergency access, evacuation controls.
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Training/CPD expectation: EO, SENDSCO/access arrangements assessor and relevant senior leaders undertake regular updates (e.g., annual updates), and the centre maintains a handover file and critical calendar.

Trigger for activating this plan

This plan is activated when any of the following occurs and risks that key exam-cycle tasks are

missed:

- Extended absence or sudden unavailability of EO / SENCo / key staff
- Exam venue unavailable or unsafe
- Major IT/cyber failure affecting exam delivery/admin
- Emergency evacuation during an exam
- Severe disruption affecting candidates' ability to sit exams (local or widespread)

Scenario response plans (centre actions)

Scenario A: Exams Officer extended absence at key points

Criteria: Key tasks not undertaken in planning/entries/pre-exams/exam time/results/post-results.

Actions

1. **Immediate handover:** Head of Centre confirms Deputy EO (SLT Link – Exams) assumes operational control.
2. **Secure access:** Deputy EO confirms access to secure storage, awarding body portals (A2C/extranets), centre email, MIS, exam timetable and contingency contacts.
3. **Prioritise deadlines** (same day):
 - Entries / amendments / access arrangements deadlines
 - Secure materials windows and downloads
 - Post-results windows and candidate consent handling
4. **Quality assurance check:**
 - Two-person check for entries, timetables, secure materials logs, and dispatch arrangements.
5. **Communications:**
 - Inform Head of Centre daily until risk stabilises.
 - Inform awarding bodies if any deadlines/irregularities are at risk (as required).
6. **Record keeping:**
 - Log actions taken and decisions made for audit/inspection.

Scenario B: SENDCO / Access Arrangements lead extended absence

Criteria: Access arrangements deadlines or implementation at risk.

Actions

1. Head of Centre appoints a named temporary AA lead (qualified/briefed).
2. Ensure all approved arrangements are communicated to:
 - EO, invigilation team, teaching staff, candidates (as appropriate)
3. Confirm staffing for readers/scribes/promoters/separate rooms and check training.
4. Day-before check: rooming and resources confirmed; contingency staff identified.

Scenario C: Teaching staff extended absence

Risk area: NEA/coursework marking, submission of marks/samples, candidate preparation communications.

Actions

1. HoD identifies a qualified replacement marker/moderator within department or cross-trust support.
2. Ensure compliance with awarding body NEA requirements and internal standardisation.

3. Protect submission deadlines: EO and HoD confirm timeline and evidence of checks.

Scenario D: Invigilator shortfall/absence

Actions

1. Maintain a reserve list and cross-train identified staff.
2. Combine rooms only where permitted and safe; maintain ratio and supervision requirements.
3. If staffing cannot be met, escalate to Head of Centre immediately to consider:
 - Room reallocation
 - Alternative timing within permitted rules
 - Contact awarding body for advice if unavoidable

Scenario E: Exam rooms unavailable at short notice

Actions

1. Identify pre-approved alternative rooms (including accessibility and JCQ conditions).
2. If the centre is partially unavailable, use an **alternative site** arrangement where necessary and in line with JCQ guidance (and notify/seek approval as required).
3. Communicate room changes to candidates discreetly; update seating plans and registers.

Scenario F: Failure of IT systems / cyber incident

Actions

1. Invoke IT incident response; preserve logs; isolate affected systems.
2. Switch to **paper-based contingency** where possible (printed timetables, printed registers, manual attendance, manual incident logs).
3. For on-screen/digital exams: contact awarding body immediately for directions; do not improvise beyond awarding body rules.
4. Confirm compliance with JCQ expectations for cyber security policy and robust IT security measures.

Scenario G: Emergency evacuation of the exam room

Actions

1. Follow the centre's written emergency evacuation procedure for exams (ICE expectations).
2. Ensure candidates are supervised at all times; maintain exam security.
3. Record full details (time out/time back, candidates affected, papers secured).
4. Report to awarding body where required, and consider special consideration guidance where appropriate.

Scenario H: Centre closed / major disruption to teaching time (extended)

Actions

1. Follow local authority/trust emergency arrangements and GOV.UK severe weather/emergency guidance.
2. Activate resilience arrangements (see Section 6) without over-assessing.

3. Communicate changes to candidates/parents as soon as confirmed.

Scenario I: Candidates unable to attend due to crisis while centre remains open

Actions

1. Apply awarding body guidance for absence and special consideration where eligible.
2. Ensure evidence is collected and retained securely until after results (minimum).

Scenario J: Centre unable to open as normal during exams period

Actions

1. Escalate to awarding body immediately to discuss alternative arrangements (including alternative site).
2. Implement communications plan (SMS/email/website) for candidates and staff.
3. Secure materials remain protected (no access beyond authorised staff).

Scenario K: Disruption in distribution of exam papers

Actions

1. EO/Deputy EO contacts awarding body immediately.
2. Secure candidates in supervised room; maintain silence conditions if timing requires.
3. Log incident and follow awarding body instructions.

Scenario L: Disruption to transportation/dispatch of scripts

Actions

1. Use awarding body-approved dispatch routes and contingency guidance (e.g., yellow label service where applicable).
2. Obtain proof of postage/dispatch; log all packages.
3. Notify awarding body if dispatch is delayed or compromised.

Scenario M: Assessment evidence not available to be marked

Actions

1. Immediately locate backups (electronic storage, teacher copies where permitted, secure shared drive).
2. If evidence is lost/corrupted, contact awarding body for instructions.
3. Record incident and corrective action.

Scenario N: Centre unable to distribute results as normal

Actions

1. Use pre-agreed alternative distribution method (secure email portal / collection windows / identity checks).
2. Ensure post-results services access remains available and candidates know timelines.
3. Maintain confidentiality and data protection compliance.

Scenario O: Exams not able to take place due to global/national crisis (widespread disruption)

Actions

1. Follow the **Joint Contingency Plan** instructions and awarding body directions.
2. Activate resilience evidence arrangements (Section 6) and preserve evidence securely.

Resilience arrangements (evidence of student performance)

Arbour Academy will follow **Ofqual's resilience guidance** on collecting and retaining evidence for GCSE, AS/A level, Project Qualifications and AEA, in the unlikely event exams cannot proceed as planned.

Principles we will apply:

- Use **existing assessment arrangements** where possible
- Avoid over-assessment (typically **one mock series is sufficient** for evidence purposes)
- Ensure evidence is:
 - Supervised (where appropriate)
 - Securely stored
 - Authenticated (work is the candidate's)
 - Sufficiently recorded so it can be understood later

For VTQs:

- We will follow awarding organisation guidance where they specify evidence expectations for resilience.

Communications plan (minimum)

Internal escalation order

1. Exams Officer → SLT Link – Exams → Head of Centre
2. SENCo/AA Lead → SLT Link – Exams → Head of Centre
3. IT Lead / Site Lead → Head of Centre

External

- Awarding bodies (as required by scenario)
- Candidates and parents/carers (timely, clear, factual updates)
- Local authority/trust estates/emergency teams (where applicable)

All decisions and communications will be logged.