



Exams Contingency Planning Protocol

November 2024

Mission Statement

As a Catholic Sixth Form College we strive to be a centre of educational excellence for the community built on faith, respect and trust. We celebrate diversity amongst all our students and staff and seek to nurture the gifts of each individual through high quality teaching and learning and dedicated pastoral care.

Values Statement

Cardinal Newman College is a community which aims to live out the Gospel values of service and love. This means that:

- The individual student is central to all our endeavours
- The College values each individual as a unique person and regards each person, made in the image and likeness of God, as worthy of the utmost respect
- The College strives to develop each person intellectually, socially and spiritually through an inclusive programme of study and enrichment
- The College values the spiritual journey of each individual and will offer opportunities for each to engage appropriately in their spiritual search
- The College is committed to creating a culture that is open and welcoming, free from fear and from violence of any kind, in which all individuals feel safe, happy and secure
- The College provides learning environments that are stimulating, enjoyable and challenging to students, fostering their creativity, imagination and search for truth
- The College encourages individuals to contribute positively to the world in which they live, to challenge injustice and to seek out more co-operative, just and peaceful forms of human existence

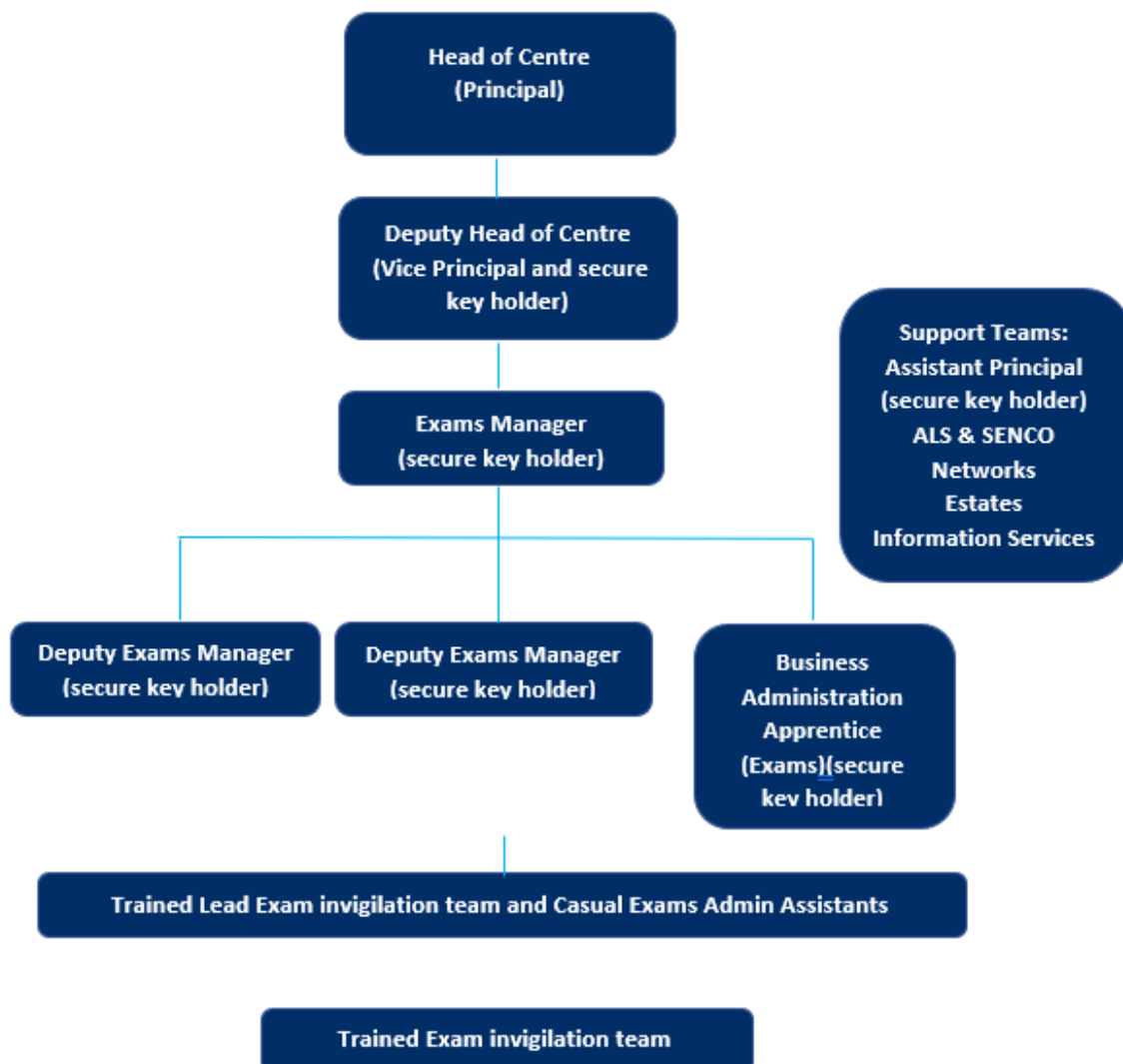
Owner	Principal and Head of Centre
Reviewer	Examinations Manager

Issue Date	November 2024 update
Review Date	October 2025

Applies To

All external examinations and assessments for Cardinal Newman College.

Structure relating to external examinations/assessments



Procedure



This plan examines potential risks and issues which could cause disruption to the exams process at Cardinal Newman 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 and 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 confirms Cardinal Newman College is compliant with the JCQ regulation (section 5.3, General Regulations for Approved Centres) in that the centre has in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This allows members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence. The examination contingency plan reinforces procedures in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency.

Head of Centre absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Teaching & Learning) would deputise as Head of Centre in the event of the Head of Centre (Principal) being absent.

Exam Manager extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

The Exams department is structured with an Exams Manager, two Deputy Exams Managers, and a Business Administration Apprentice (Exams). Responsibility at SLT level sits with the Vice Principal (Curriculum and Teaching & Learning).

In a period of extended absence, the Deputy Exams Managers would take responsibility for carrying out the duties of the Exams Manager and would work in consultation with the Vice Principal and Head of Information Services (for technical support). Procedure manuals are available which cover all exam processes and regular training is undertaken by the Exams Team to keep abreast of procedural changes. Additional advice and guidance could be sought from Exams Officer contacts within the local area if necessary. The College benefits from an experienced Information Services team with knowledge of the Exams system, procedures and regulations, should further capacity or support be required.

ALS Manager/SENCO, Deputy SENCO or Specialist Assessor extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Assessments for access arrangements are carried out by the ALS Manager/SENCO, Deputy SENCO and a Specialist Teacher within the centre and signed off by the ALS Manager/SENCO or Deputy SENCO. In the event of the extended absence of the ALS Manager/SENCO, the Deputy SENCO or the Specialist Teacher, the others would temporarily take over the assessor role for the whole college. In the event of the extended



absence of the ALS Manager/SENCO, the Deputy SENCO would take responsibility for the SENCO elements of the ALS Manager's role.

Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

In the event of a period of extended absence of a member of the teaching staff, the Head of Department with responsibility for the curriculum area together with a Senior Leader would arrange teaching cover. Any new staff providing cover would be briefed as part of their induction process on arrangements for assessment and examinations. Their practice in terms of assessments would be monitored by an experienced member of the curriculum team.

Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

New invigilators are provided with mandatory training following appointment and prior to allocation of any invigilation sessions. Their first appointment is always as assistant to experienced members of the invigilation team; they are only allowed to work independently or as a Lead Invigilator once they and the Exams Manager are happy that they are competent in all processes and procedures. Annual training sessions are held in order to refresh knowledge, communicate JCQ regulation changes and update local information.

The College currently has access to a retained pool of approximately 80 invigilators; when invigilators resign or retire from the pool, recruitment procedures ensure that they are replaced.

Within the wider College staff, colleagues are required to assist during main exam sessions (in particular with students with access arrangements) and are instructed by the Exams Manager/Deputy Exams Manager with regard to their responsibilities and duties.

Minor absence issues (such as sickness) are covered by another invigilator from the pool or a member of the wider staff.

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

The College is well resourced and therefore has sufficient space to accommodate most unforeseen issues affecting rooms. The majority of exams are accommodated within existing large spaces and where cohort sizes require or EAA dictates, teaching rooms or offices are used with lessons relocated or cancelled if necessary. Where the larger exam spaces are not sufficient for the cohorts sitting examinations, the Exams team will make arrangements to utilise Lancaster University School of Mathematics as an alternative site and make the necessary applications through JCQ CAP.

In the event that College accommodation were unavailable, unsuitable or insufficient, we would discuss options with the awarding organisations including the use of Lancaster University School of Mathematics, located less than 500m away from the College. Local resources such as the Guild Hall Foyer, local church halls and UCLan conference spaces could be used as further alternative options.

Failure of IT systems

The College endeavours to minimise any IT disruption via resilient design and preventative maintenance. In the event of an issue, this would be dealt with in accordance with the Business Continuity Plan, which is tested and updated regularly. Where such failure impacted on scheduled exams, steps would be taken to reschedule these exams where possible and, where not, options to sit these exams 'offline' or at another campus or local provider would be investigated in co-ordination with the awarding body. Cloud based storage of key documents ensures that records supporting the delivery of paper-based exams can be accessed 'anywhere' without reliance on the College on-site infrastructure.

Cyber Security – cyber attack on college systems

Detection and Reporting

1. **Identification:** Any staff or student who identifies a potential cyber-attack must immediately report it to Network Services.
2. **Initial Assessment:** Network Services will assess the nature and scope of the incident.

Containment

1. **Immediate Action:** Network Services will take immediate steps to contain the attack and prevent further damage. This may include disconnecting affected systems from the network.
2. **Notification:** Inform SLT and other relevant parties of the incident.

Eradication

1. **Remove Threat:** Network Services will work to eliminate the cause of the attack, such as removing malware from infected systems.
2. **System Cleaning:** Ensure all affected systems are thoroughly cleaned and secure.

Recovery

1. **Restore Systems:** Begin the process of restoring systems and data from backups. Ensure systems are fully operational and secure before bringing them back online.
2. **Verification:** Verify that all systems are functioning normally and that no traces of the attack remain.

Communication

1. **Internal Communication:** Keep all staff and students informed about the status of the incident and any actions they need to take.
2. **External Communication:** Notify relevant external parties, including the NCSC, local law enforcement, JISC, and the Department for Education, as appropriate.

Post-Incident Review

1. **Incident Report:** Network Services will compile a detailed report of the incident, including how it was detected, the response actions taken, and the impact on the college.
2. **Review Meeting:** SLT will convene a meeting to review the incident report and evaluate the effectiveness of the response.
3. **Policy Update:** Update this policy and the incident management plan based on lessons learned from the incident.

Preventative Measures

1. **Regular Backups:** Ensure that all critical data is backed up regularly and that backups are stored securely offline.
2. **Cybersecurity Training:** Provide regular cybersecurity training for all staff and students.
3. **System Updates:** Keep all software and systems up to date with the latest security patches.
4. **Regular Review of Cyber Defences:** Review college technological cyber-defences at date of solution renewal.
5. **Regular Penetration Testing and Cyber Security Reviews:** Conducted annually by external third-party security experts to provide assurance and recommendations on college cyber security strategy.

Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period

All teaching and support staff are equipped to work effectively from home. In the event of the centre not being able to open as normal, teaching would continue online following the normal college timetable. If necessary, alternative options would be explored such as moving essential provision to an alternative external location (such as Lancaster University School of Mathematics, local leisure centres, hotels, local schools, etc.). In such instances, details would be communicated to students via the College's website, text messaging facilities and Microsoft Teams. Staff would be informed via the College's website, text messaging facilities and Teams.

Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period

In the event of the centre not being able to open as normal, appropriate communication with the relevant Awarding Bodies would be undertaken by the Exams Manager or Deputy Exams Manager and alternative options would be explored such as moving exams to an external location, for example Lancaster University School of Mathematics, local leisure centres, schools etc.

All arrangements would be agreed with the Awarding Body before being put in place. In such instances, details would be communicated to candidates via the College's website, email, text messaging facilities and Microsoft Teams. Staff involved in exams (including invigilators), would be contacted by email and telephone.



Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open

Response is dependent on the type of issue.

All candidates are made aware, prior to the start of an exam series, of the need to inform the Exams Office if they are unable to attend an exam.

If a candidate is able to sit the exam but cannot attend the centre due to a crisis, appropriate communication, including following the relevant regulations, with the relevant Awarding Bodies is undertaken by the Exams Manager or Deputy Exams Manager and alternative options explored; home, hospital, alternative centre, etc.

Special Consideration applications would be submitted to the relevant Awarding Bodies should the candidate(s) be unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances where alternative arrangements could not be made, or are not agreed by the Awarding Body, and where the candidate(s) meet the published criteria for such applications.

Disruption in the distribution of examination papers

The Exams Team will communicate with awarding organisations to make alternative arrangements for delivery of examination papers, which may include the use of print facilities at College, to produce papers from electronic documents supplied by the awarding organisation.

Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts

All scripts are returned using the designated dispatch methods prescribed by the Awarding Body concerned. Where this becomes unavailable or inappropriate, the Awarding Body will be contacted to discuss suitable alternatives.

Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

In the event of large-scale damage or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked, the Exams Manager or Deputy Exams Manager would notify the awarding body immediately and action taken in accordance with their instructions.

Centre unable to distribute results as normal

Results are downloaded the day before the published release date in accordance with JCQ regulations. Students can access their results on CEDAR (the school's secure information portal) from 8.00am on the published exam results release date.

In the event of an IT failure impacting on the downloading of results, this would be dealt with in accordance with the Business Continuity Plan which is tested and updated regularly. The College has access to other

local internet options if required. If publication electronically is not viable, hard copy results would be produced utilising local printing facilities for collection and/or posting to candidates. Any last minute changes to the distribution of results would be communicated to candidates via the College's website, email, text messaging facilities and Microsoft Teams.

Related Documents

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning – Ofqual

What schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted:

1. Contingency planning

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans. When drafting contingency plans, you should consider the following guidance:

General contingency guidance

- Emergency planning and response from the Department for Education in England
- Opening and closing local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England
- Exceptional closure days from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- Checklist - exceptional closure of schools from the Department of Education in Northern Ireland
- School closures from NI Direct
- Opening schools in extremely bad weather - guidance for schools from the Welsh Government
- Procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office.

2. 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.

See also:

- JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

3.Steps you should take

3.1 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.

3.2 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.
- 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.

3.3 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.

4. Steps the awarding organisation should take

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

5. 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.

See also: JCQ's guidance on special considerations

6. 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.

(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 01 October 2020)

<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

- 15.1 The qualification regulators, JCQ 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/what-schools-and-colleges-should-do-if-exams-or-other-assessments-are-seriously-disrupted>

- 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/bodies.
- 15.3 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.
- 15.4 In the event that the head of centre decides the centre cannot be opened for scheduled examinations, the relevant awarding body 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 a 'contingency day' for examinations, summer 2021. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

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

In the event of national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2021, 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 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.

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of this contingency arrangement so that they may take it into:

**(JCQ guidance above taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2021-2022
<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>

Monitoring

This protocol is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that Cardinal Newman College deals with external examinations or assessments in accordance with current requirements and regulations.

Communication

The Exams Team and members of the Senior Leadership Team will be issued with a copy of this protocol on an annual basis. The procedure is stored on the College's cloud based platform for access on or off site. A hard copy will be stored locally within the designated Exams office.