

MAY 2026

CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR AN EXAM DAY

As final preparations are made for the summer examination series, all centres must ensure they have effective plans in place to manage the absence of their exams manager or examinations officer on an exam day.

Under JCQ requirements, as set out in the *General Regulations for Approved Centres*, every centre must maintain an up-to-date written contingency plan that is available for inspection. This plan must be reviewed and updated annually by a member of the senior leadership team and clearly communicated across the centre. It must:

- cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery
- minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates
- cover the absence of the...examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Members of The Exams Office can support contingency arrangements by utilising the tools within the Hub to pre-prepare materials such as:

- Second Pair of Eyes Check forms
- Roving Invigilator forms
- Exam Room Clocks (if an electronic clock, also displaying exam information, is used)

**Areas of contingency**

The table below outlines the key areas centres must consider when planning for the absence of an exams manager/officer on an exam day or during an exam session, and signposts additional guidance to support effective contingency arrangements.

Areas to be covered	Information	Support materials
Preparing for each exam session	The actions which must be completed in advance of each exam session to ensure that assessment materials are accurate, secure, and fully prepared, and that invigilation and access arrangements are correctly in place	The Exams Office <i>Exam Day Checklist</i>

Preparing for a JCQ inspection	Providing information relating to the JCQ General/Centre Inspection which is an unannounced visit to check that examination arrangements for general and vocational examinations and assessments are being delivered in accordance with the regulations	The Exams Office <i>A Guide to JCQ Centre Inspections</i>
Exam timetable	Provide access to an exams timetable which includes the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject title &amp; paper number</li> <li>• Awarding body</li> <li>• Qualification</li> <li>• Unit or component (and tier, if applicable)</li> <li>• Session – AM or PM</li> <li>• Duration</li> </ul>	Centre timetable  The Exams Office <i>Exams Timetable Tool</i>
Managing timetable clashes	Regulation relating to candidate exam clashes within an exam session, across sessions and overnight supervision	<i>JCQ Instructions for conducting examinations</i>  Section 7 (Timetable clashes)  Section 8 (Overnight supervision arrangements)
Invigilators	Provide a complete list of invigilators, including their contact details, and produce a rota showing which invigilators are assigned to each exam session or day, and the rooms in which they will be invigilating or supporting access arrangements	Information created within the centre
Setting up an exam room	Ensure that every exam room is set up in line with JCQ regulations	The Exams Office <i>Exam Room Checklist</i>
Access arrangements	Information relating to candidates who have been granted access arrangements, together with details of how these arrangements will be implemented and where applicable, who will be responsible for facilitating them	Information created within the centre – see SENCo (or equivalent role)

	Instructions on how to modify question papers for access arrangement purposes (for example, downloading a PDF copy of the standard question for printing onto coloured paper)	
Removing question papers from secure storage	Instructions on the removal of question papers from secure storage in line with JCQ regulations	JCQ <i>Instructions for conducting examinations</i>  Section 5 (Removing question papers from secure storage)
Access to awarding body secure sites	Ensuring that the senior leader who is responsible for exams and assessments has login details to awarding body secure sites and instructions relating to accessing information – and awarding body contact details	Information created within the centre
Downloading electronic question papers	Regulations relating to the downloading of electronic question papers from awarding body secure sites	JCQ <i>Instructions for conducting examinations</i>  Section 4 (Arrangements for handling secure electronic materials)  The Exams Office <i>Handling secure electronic materials log template</i>
Dealing with a candidate who arrives late/very late for an examination	Instructions on how to deal with a candidate who arrives late/very late for an exam	JCQ <i>Instructions for conducting examinations</i>  Section 21 (Candidates who arrive late)  The Exams Office <i>What to do in the event of...checklist</i>

		within the <i>Exam Day Checklist</i>
Dealing with incidents of actual and/or suspected malpractice	Regulations relating to the handling, recording and reporting of actual and/or suspected malpractice	JCQ <i>Instructions for conducting examinations</i> Section 24 (Malpractice)  The Exams Office <i>What to do in the event of...checklist</i> within the <i>Exam Day Checklist</i>
Handling exam room scenarios	Guidance on how to deal with a variety of potential exam-related situations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A candidate requires an emergency access arrangement(s) at the time of an exam</li> <li>• A candidate arrives for an exam who is clearly unwell or extremely distressed</li> <li>• A candidate is absent from an exam</li> <li>• A serious disruption in the exam room (including emergency evacuation)</li> </ul>	The Exams Office <i>What to do in the event of...checklist</i> within the <i>Exam Day Checklist</i>
Collecting, packing and dispatching exam scripts	Regulations relating to the collection of examination materials at the end of the examination  Instructions on how to pack and dispatch exam scripts for marking	JCQ <i>Instructions for conducting examinations</i> Section 27 (Collecting scripts) Section 28 (Packing scripts) Section 29 (Sending scripts)  (England only) <a href="#">Dispatch of exam scripts: yellow label service</a>

Handling unused stationery at the end of an exam	The regulations relating to the storage of unused exam-related stationery at the end of the examination	JCQ <i>Instructions for conducting examinations</i> Section 30 (Unused stationery)
Releasing question papers to centre staff	The regulations relating to the release of question papers to centre staff after the examination	JCQ <i>Instructions for conducting examinations</i> Section 31 (Releasing question papers)
After each exam session	The actions to be taken after each exam session to ensure that scripts are accurately processed, records are retained in line with regulations, and examination materials are securely packed, dispatched, and any required post-exam reporting is completed within the required timescales	The Exams Office <i>Exam Day Checklist</i>
Preparing for the next exam session/day	The checks and actions which must be completed in preparation for the next exam session or day to ensure that examination materials, resources, and access arrangements are fully in place and compliant with regulations	The Exams Office <i>Exam Day Checklist</i>

*The contents of this article were correct at the time of publication (April 2026)*