Policy Name: Exams Contingency Policy
Policy Number: 6.21
Date: 1 September 2024

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The Purpose of this Exam Contingency Policy:

i) To examine potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process at Sidcot School.

ii) To mitigate the impact these disruptions, have on our exam process by outlining the actions/procedures to be invoked in the event of such a disruption.

iii) This plan is informed by scenarios contained in the 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 notice Preparing for disruption to examinations (effective from 11 October 2021).

iv) This plan also confirms that Sidcot School is compliant with the JCQ regulation (section 5.3, *General Regulations for Approved Centres 2018-2019*) 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*.

Causes of Potential Disruption to the Exam Process:

1. Exams Officer Extended Absence at Key Points in the Exam Process (cycle)

1.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan
Key tasks required in the management and administration of the exam cycle not undertaken, including:

- **Planning**
  ◦ 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

1.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:</u>
The SIMS/Exams Team would assume responsibility for all aspects of the Examination Officer's role. They are continually briefed on the status of examination administration and are the 2nd key holder for the exams store. They would be supported by the Deputy Head (Academic) and the Head of IT Services (who is the Exams Officer's Line Manager). In the event of the Exams Officer being absent, the Head of IT Services would assume the responsibility, and should she also be absent, the Head of Centre would assume the responsibility for exams.

2. <u>Head of Centre's Absence or Absence of a Member of the Senior Leadership Team with Oversight of Examination Administration, at Any Point in the Exam Process (cycle)</u>

2.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>
The absence of the Head of Centre or of the Member of the Senior Leadership Team with Oversight of Examination Administration.

2.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:</u>
As the school's Head of Centre is the Deputy Head (Academic), in his absence, the role would be covered by the Headmaster. If the absence is for an extended period, then the Headmaster would appoint an acting Head of Centre from the members of SLT or SMT.

In the event of the absence of the Member of the Senior Leadership Team with Oversight of Examination Administration (i.e. the Examinations Officer's line manager), the oversight would be covered by the Head of Centre.

3. <u>SENCo's Extended Absence at Key Points in the Exam Cycle</u>

3.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>
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 not arranged for exam rooms

3.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:</u>
The Learning Support Teacher is qualified to test for access arrangements. She would also assume responsibility for the collection and collation of evidence of need and evidence to support normal way of working, and the identification of any modified paper requirements. She would make any application for access arrangements via Access Arrangements Online with the support of the Examinations Officer who has experience of using this website. Support for access arrangement candidates is provided by experienced and specially selected members of the invigilation team and therefore falls within general exams management by the Examinations Officer.

4. **Teaching Staff Extended Absence at Key Points in the Exam Cycle**

4.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>
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
- ◦

4.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:</u>

The Head of Subject or a departmental colleague would be asked to take responsibility for providing information about early/estimated entry; full exam entry; meeting entry deadlines. In the event of prolonged absence; a regular supply teacher, a short-contract appointment, or a switch of roles within the department would allow the absent teacher's exam class(es) to receive appropriate preparation for the exam. After the exam, the Exams Officer would apply for special consideration if appropriate.

5. Invigilators: Lack of Appropriately Trained Invigilators or Invigilator Absence

5.1 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

5.2 Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:
The Centre's invigilation team is kept at sufficient numbers to cover exam requirements. In the event of unavailability of invigilators; a replacement would be sought from within the team. If this is not possible, the SIMS/Exams team is able to step in. Additionally, exams of any appreciable size are allocated a spare invigilator, which would allow the exam to run as planned with 1 invigilator unavailable. If more invigilation is required, the Examinations Officer could invigilate and ask her line manager to provide the support usually provided by the Examinations Officer, and Teachers of Learning Support could be asked to take over a job such as reading/scribing to free up an invigilator. Additionally, invigilators could be bought in from supply agencies.

6. Exam Rooms: Lack of Appropriate Rooms or Main Venues Unavailable at Short Notice

6.1 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

6.2 Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:
The Director of Operations communicates any planned works that might impact the availability of rooms for exams as soon as it is known (typically a year ahead. This allows for the relocation of exams within the school to be planned at the same time as the works are being planned. All rooming for exams is done well ahead of the exam season and communicated to staff. This contingency would only be required if a designated exam room was taken out of use due to an emergency. The examinations officer would respond by: looking for alternative venues within school e.g. assembly hall or classrooms or library. In the event of a long-term problem involving the main exam venue (sports hall) the Examinations Officer would seek alternatives in the locality e.g. conference centres, hotels, sports centres etc. JCQ and other awarding bodies would be notified of this as set out by

their regulations/guidelines.

7. <u>Failure of IT Systems</u>

7.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>:
- ◦ MIS system failure at final entry deadline
- ◦ MIS system failure during exams preparation
- ◦ IT system failure before/during online exams
- ◦ MIS system failure at results release time

7.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption</u>:
Exam entries are made in SIMS over a period of days/weeks leading up to the final deadline and sent by A2C well ahead of the deadline, so while an ICT issue would mean entries would be delayed until the issue was fixed, it is unlikely that the deadline would be missed. IT Support have a back-up system which would be the first port of call. If there was a danger of the deadline being missed entries would be made directly using the Awarding Bodies' secure websites. Seating plans can be drawn up using MS Excel. For online exams, the Examinations Officer asks IT Support to check the relevant software, including any recent updates well ahead of the exam. For these exams, the relevant Awarding Bodies always send a paper copy of the exam for use in the event if IT failure. Results are also normally done using A2C and SIMS but again in the event of an ICT issue this task could be switched to the Awarding Bodies' secure websites. IT Services are advised of results dates well in advance, so that they can plan their maintenance schedule to ensure that as far as it depends on them, the MIS/internet availability is functioning correctly at these times.

All client systems are be backed up nightly. Backup infrastructure is architected to provide separation from the rest of the network and prevent malicious encryption of backup files. In addition, offsite 'air-gapped' backups are available via iland to offer protection against a Ransomware attack encrypting onsite backup files. These backups would allow restoration of services in the event of a cyber attack.

8. <u>Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or centre lock down)</u>

8.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>:
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

8.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption</u>:
See Lockdown Policy (exams) (policy 6.12, appendix 2)

9. <u>Disruption of Teaching Time: Centre Closed for an Extended Period</u>

9.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>
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.

9.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption</u>:
The School would adopt Online Supported Learning (OSL), where students are able to access the teaching from home using digital devices. This facility is also available to students when absent for shorter periods if they are unable to attend but otherwise able to access the curriculum (e.g. self-isolating but not unwell).

10. <u>Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations - centre remains open</u>

10.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>:
Candidates at risk of being unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

10.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption</u>:
Consider moving the start times of the examination for all candidates, taking care that nobody unnecessarily becomes a very late arrival. If this is not possible, candidates present to start as normal, and absent candidates advised to take steps to ensure that they can prove that they have no access to the question paper (e.g. hand mobile phone to minibus/taxi driver and ask them to escort the candidate to reception). If this is not possible, then the Examinations Officer will apply for special consideration for a candidate absent for acceptable reasons.

11. <u>Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examinations period</u>

11.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>:
Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

11.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption</u>:
Investigate whether it's safe to open the school just to exam candidates. If not, the Examinations Officer would seek alternative venues in the locality e.g. conference centres, hotels, sports centres etc., with exam classes/years being made a priority. JCQ and other awarding bodies would be notified of this as set out by their regulations/guidelines and Special Consideration would be applied for in respect of all candidates sitting exams in a re-arranged venue. This would be communicated to parents, carers and candidates using SIMS InTouch. If time allowed, other methods could also be used. If this is not possible, then the Examinations Officer will apply for special consideration for a candidate absent for acceptable reasons.

12. <u>Disruption in the distribution of examination papers</u>

12.1 <u>Criteria for implementation of the plan</u>:
Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the centre in advance of examinations

12.2 <u>Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption</u>:
If papers had not been received five working days in advance of a given exam; the relevant Awarding Body would be contacted. If the Awarding Body was unable to send papers on time, arrangements would be made for secure electronic

despatch, downloading and printing off.

13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts

13.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan:
Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

13.2 Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:
- Where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, the Examinations Officer will contact the relevant awarding bodies to seek advice and instructions
- For any examinations where centres make their own collection arrangements, the Examinations Officer will investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication 'Instructions for conducting examinations'.
- For International Baccalaureate scripts, which are collected by a courier, alternative couriers could be sought or the scripts could be sent by Royal Mail Special Delivery. In this case, if collection was not available, they could be taken to a Post Office (nearest is Winscombe Post Office, 8 Woodborough Road).
- In all cases, completed scripts will be remain in secure storage until collection.

14. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

14.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan:
Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

14.2 Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:
In cases of controlled assessment/coursework material: investigate how/why it happened – may be a staff training issue around safe storage of students' work. If possible/allowed, re-write/re-make or if stored digitally, re-print. Inform the Awarding Body and send off any viable material with relevant JCQ/other Awarding Body lost or damaged coursework forms. If possible, awarding organisations will generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by that awarding organisation. Where this is not possible, candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series. Communicate to students and parents how the issue is being resolved.

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency)

15.1 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

15.2 Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:
Results are sent out using SIMS secure email service – InTouch. Therefore, in the event of the school being out of use on results day, this could be done from an alternative venue. In case of issues preventing the download of results within school, the download of results and printing of results slips could be done from the Awarding Bodies' secures website at another place.

The school uses an electronic application form (which has all of the features of the JCQ post results application form, with any additional information required by other awarding bodies added), so candidates can make an application from anywhere in the world. This can be accessed remotely by the Exams Officer.

16. Withdrawal of centre approval status

16.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan:
- ◦ sanction imposed, following a malpractice investigation
- ◦ breach of Awarding Body's the terms and conditions.
- ◦ significant and/or repeated quality issues identified by an Awarding Body
- ◦ long-standing financial issues which have not been resolved
- ◦ no longer delivering the relevant qualifications
- ◦ Awarding Body no longer has confidence in senior management team

16.2 Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption:
Appropriate action should be taken before this point to prevent the withdrawal of centre approval status. This would generally involve responding to notices to improve from the relevant Awarding Body. However, if this is not possible, the school would seek to cooperate with the Awarding Body to ensure that any required documentation is returned, and to assist any affected learners in finding an alternative provider.

17. General note

Some of these arrangements are communicated to candidates well in advance of the examinations (e.g. what to do if you are running late), so that any changes affect exam performance as little as possible. If a risk is anticipated, reminders can be sent to candidates via email and/or MS Teams chat.

18. References

Awarding Body Regulations
- General Regulations for Approved Centres JCQ
- Instructions for Conducting Examinations JCQ
- Cambridge Handbook (UK), Cambridge Assessment International Education

Other Regulations
- What schools, colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted, Ofqual (and Northern Ireland Council

for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment)
- Preparing for disruption to examinations, JCQ

Relevant Policies
6.12   Exams Policy (including the responsibility of Staff for Examinations

19. Monitoring and Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed every year, or sooner if changes to legislation, guidance or practice so require or an event or incident requires.
The examinations officer is will undertake this review in conjunction with their manager and the Head of Centre.

20. Document Change History – document any changes since 19 April 2016 – review of the policy

Date of change	Detail significant changes and any new legislation / guidance taken into account
19.04.2016	Review of policy, minor typos.
19.10.17	Review of policy, changes made to reflect changes in personnel.
14.02.18	Addition of sections required to accompany the application to become a Pearson Vocational Centre in anticipation of delivering BTEC qualifications.
30.10.18	Review of policy, changes made to reflect changes in JCQ regulations
30.10.19	Review of policy, changes made to reflect changes in personnel, significant extra detail added to sections 8, 9 and 11.
1.10.20	Review of policy, changes made to section 1 and Appendix 1 to reflect the appointment of a Deputy Exams Officer. Section 2 added to document the escalation process in the event of the absence of the Head of Centre. Reference in section 8 updated to reflect the new location of the lockdown policy (exams), and section 9 updated to reflect the introduction of OSL.
4.11.21	Review of policy, changes made to sections 1,5, Appendix 1 to reflect changes in personnel.
	Changes made to sections 10, 11, 13 to reflect the changes to guidance from Ofqual and JCQ.
	Extra details added to sections 14, 15. Section 17 added.
10.1.23	Review of policy, changes made to section 2 to include contingency arrangements for the absence of the Examinations Officer's line manager and to section 7 to take into account the potential impact of a cyber-attack.
12.03.2024	Reviewed by Examinations Officer – no changes made
24.06.2024	Reviewed by Examinations Officer – small detail changes

<u>Appendix</u> 1

Current holders of posts referred to in this policy:

Head of Centre - Christian Hughes, Deputy Head (Academic)

Examinations Officer's line manager - Allison Clark, Head of IT Services (Member of SMT)

Exams Officer -

SENCo - Kate Young

Learning Support Teacher - Alison Knapman