Alde Valley Academy

Exams Contingency Plan

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Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process at Alde Valley Academy. By outlining actions/procedures to be followed 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', the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the JCQ document Preparing for disruption to examinations (Effective from 1 September 2024).

This plan details how Alde Valley Academy complies with the JCQ's General Regulations for Approved Centres (5.3 Centre management) by having in place for inspection that must be reviewed and updated annually, a written contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery.

Contingency arrangements

The centre must have an up to date written contingency plan.

The contingency plan must cover all aspects of examination/assessment administration and delivery. Senior leaders must have robust contingency arrangements in place that will minimise the risk to examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on candidates.

The plan must cover the following scenarios:

- the head of centre, relevant senior leader(s) with oversight of examination and assessment administration, SENCo (or equivalent role), examinations officer or any other key staff essential to the examination process being absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle
- the potential impact of other events such as flooding which could lead to all or parts of the centre becoming unavailable
- potential issues with the centre's IT systems

As part of the contingency plan the centre must identify an alternative site if examinations cannot be conducted at the registered address. Larger centres may require more than one potential alternative site or different sites for different Year Groups.

The centre must have at least one senior member of staff (senior designated contact) who is available to manage emergency requests from awarding bodies that are results related during the summer holidays. However, a number of contacts can be provided to reduce the risk of this falling on one individual throughout the summer holidays.

The centre must ensure that candidates' work is backed-up and should consider the contingency of candidates' work being backed-up on two separate devices, including one off-site back-up.

Appropriate security arrangements must be implemented which protect candidates' work in the event of IT system corruption and cyber-attacks. (GR 3.17-19)

National Centre Number Register and other information requirements

The head of centre will ensure that the centre responds to the National Centre Number Register annual update by the end of October every year which includes providing senior designated contact details (this might include a personal mobile number and/or email address). These must be the contact details of someone who can be reached in an emergency if the centre is closed over the summer and who can mobilise resources to respond to the issue. (GR 5.3)

Head of Centre absence at a critical stage of the exam cycle

Where the head of centre may be absent at a critical stage of the examination cycle, main duties and responsibilities will be escalated in accordance with the centre's written escalation process.

Causes of potential disruption to the exam process

1. Exam Officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle)

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 and trained

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 examinations
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
- candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates
- 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 e.g. very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required 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

Centre actions

- Assistant Headteacher (Senior Team) to liaise with Examinations staff and Trust Exam Officers over entries.
- Assistant Headteacher (Senior Team), Head of Years, Examinations staff and Trust Exam Officers to liaise over pre-exam administration.
- Lead Invigilator (JNa) to liaise with Assistant Headteacher (Senior Team) regarding exam time issues and results.
- Contact OCR - they offer a service called "Emergency Exam Officer Contingency Service" where they will offer support to someone stepping into the role of Exam Officer.
- The Exams Officer has produced an "Exam Guide" detailing every step of the exam process to support if needed.

2. SENCo extended absence at key points 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:

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

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:

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

Centre actions

- Deputy SENCo to liaise with Exams Officer over SENCo absence

3. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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 (including controlled assessment and coursework) 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 marks
- Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines

Centre actions

- Line Manager and Exams Office to liaise with remaining teaching staff of the department

4. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

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

Centre actions

- Recruitment and training is done well in advance
- Exams Officer to cover absences or shortages, although Alde Valley Academy policy is not to work to the minimum ratio
- Support and Admin staff to be trained in the event of on the day shortages

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

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 expected incident at exam time

Centre actions

- Where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, make use of other available rooms within the centre, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding body
- Where main exam venue(s) unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time) where possible, move to alternative venue, prioritising candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned

Alternative site(s) details:

- AVA will communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue via email/Iris Reach
- AVA will ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- (after the exam) AVA will 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
- Leiston Leisure centre (Sports Hall) could be utilised for examination purposes
- EO to liaise with other local Exam Officers to determine whether exams could take place at another local school or a school within the Trust (Beccles High School, Bungay High School or Alde Valley Academy).
- EO to contact local centres with large rooms for exams to be sat there in an emergency (Leiston Library, Leiston Public Hall, St Margaret of Antioch Church Leiston)

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of the delivery of examinations

Centre actions

- EO to liaise with IT manager to ensure back-ups are being made regularly and stored appropriately
- Provide training for authorised staff on the importance of creating strong unique passwords and keeping all account details secret
- Provide training for staff on awareness of all types of social engineering/phishing attempts
- Enable additional security wherever possible
- Update passwords that may have been exposed
- Setting up secure account recovery options
- Reviewing and managing connected applications
- Monitoring accounts and regularly reviewing account access, including removing access when no longer required
- Ensuring only authorised members of staff can securely access awarding body's online systems in line with awarding body regulations regarding cyber security and the JCQ document Guidance for centres on cyber-security.
- AVA will report any actual or suspected compromise of an awarding body's online systems immediately to the relevant awarding body

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- IT system corruption affecting candidate's work
- MIS system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS system failure during exams preparation
- MIS system failure at results release time

Centre actions

- Exams Officer and IT Manager to liaise with Awarding Bodies as to appropriate action

8. Emergency Evacuation of the exam room (or centre lockdown)

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Whole centre evacuation (or lockdown) during exam time due to serious incident resulting in exam candidates being unable to start, proceed with or complete their exams

Centre actions

- 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 as soon as possible and follow its instructions
- where accommodation is limited, prioritise candidates whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned
- (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

9. *Disruption of teaching time – 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

Centre actions

- 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
- 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
- Headteacher, Governors, SLT to take the necessary action

10. Candidates may not be able to take examinations – centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates may not be able to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal because of a crisis

Centre actions

- focus on options that enable candidates to take their examinations (referencing the JCQ document Preparing for disruption to examinations)
- 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 sat 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 – via email, Iris Reach, letters
- 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

11. *Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period

***Criteria for implementation of the plan**

- Centre unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

  **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*

Centre actions

- focus on enabling candidates to take their examinations
- 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 (This could include implementing alternative arrangements for the conducting of examinations and notifying the JCQ Centre Inspection Service of an alternative site arrangement by submitting the JCQ Alternative Site form online, using the Centre Admin Portal)
- 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
- 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

Alternative site/s details:

- Leiston Leisure centre
- St Margaret of Antioch Church Leiston
- Sir John Leman

12. *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

Centre actions

- 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

13. Delay in collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessments evidence

Centre actions

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, seek advice from the relevant awarding organisations and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding organisation
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own arrangements for transportation, investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ document Instructions for conducting examinations
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until as close to the collection time as possible

14. 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

Centre actions

- liaise with the awarding body to determine if candidate marks for affected assessments may be able to be generated based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding body
- where marks cannot be generated by awarding body, inform candidates they may need to retake the affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series

15. *Centre unable to distribute results as normal 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

Centre actions

- 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
- 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 via email, Iris Reach, letter

Alternative site/s:

- Leiston Leisure centre

- St Margaret of Antioch Church Leiston

16. Exams are cancelled and Teacher Assessed Grades are required

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre is unable to conduct any formal external exams as per government guidance, such as during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Centre actions

- As per Ofqual guidance, all mock papers are retained by the department in the event that exams are cancelled and teacher assessed grades will be required.
- Students will conduct mock exams in exam conditions

Links to other JCQ and GOV documentation

- *General Regulations for Approved Centres*
    - http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/general-regulations
- *Guidance notes on alternative site arrangements*
    - http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms
- *Guidance notes concerning transferred candidates*
    - http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/online-forms
- *Instructions for Conducting Examinations*
    - http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations
- *A guide to the special consideration process*
    - http://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/regulations-and-guidance
- *Emergency planning and response: Severe weather; Exam disruption*
    - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland
- *Teaching time lost due to severe weather conditions*
    - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teaching-time-lost-due-to-severe-weather-conditions
- *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
- *Statutory guidance on school closures*
    - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools