

Conduct for Examinations – Contingency Plan Procedure

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to examine the potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the management and administration of the exam process at University College Birmingham. By outlining actions/procedures to be followed in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on the exam process.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This procedure should be read and understood by all staff involved in the exam delivery process. This plan is informed by information contained in the Joint contingency plan for the examination system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland which can be found [here](#). In this document, it is stated that “Schools and colleges should also be prepared for possible disruption to exams and assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.”

3. Causes of potential disruption to the exam process

Cyber attack on University systems – any incident of cyber attack which affects any aspect of the delivery of examinations or assessments should be promptly reported to the relevant awarding body/bodies.

College IT systems are backed up at all times in case of such attack and relevant web and mail check systems are implemented in University College Birmingham to provide protection to Web and E mail servers from cyber-attacks.

Where candidates produce work electronically ensure all work is backed up regularly and stored securely on the centres IT system, ensuring protection of the candidates’ work from corruption and considering the risks and implications of any cyber-attack. Refer to NCSE Cyber Security Guidance (NCSC.GOV.UK)

- 3.1 **Exams Co-ordinator or Exams officer extended absence at key points in the exam process (cycle) due to illness or other may impact:**

a) 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

b) 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

c) Pre-exams

Exam timetabling, room allocation, and invigilation schedules not prepared

Candidates not briefed on exam timetables and awarding body information for candidates

Exam/assessment marks and samples of candidates' work not submitted to awarding bodies/external moderators

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.

d) Exam Time

Exams/assessments not taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding bodies

Required reports requests not submitted to awarding bodies or JCQ during exam/assessment periods e.g. Very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special considerations

Access arrangements not adequately implemented.

Candidates' scripts not dispatched as required to awarding bodies

e) Results and post results

Access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates

The facilitation of the post-results services

4. Centre actions to ensure continuity and mitigate the impact of disruption.

- 4.1 Temporary coordinator/Exams officer to be appointed to cover any extended absence, ensuring the team is managed and all key tasks are met
- 4.2 Procedure manuals are available which cover all exam process for each awarding body used by the College.
- 4.3 CPD cross training within the Exams team to ensure all areas of the exams processes and deadlines can be met
- 4.4 Exams team work closely together and support one another and are encouraged to use online resources to seek advice and guidance on the exams process.
- 4.5 Multiple team members are capable of running examinations within the University Examinations team.

5. Specialist teacher or SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam cycle could impact:

- 5.1 Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process within the exam cycle not undertaken including:

a) Planning

Candidates not assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements

University 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

b) 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 deadlines

Staff providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained.

c) Exam Time

Access arrangements candidate support not arranged for exam rooms

6. Centre Actions

- Centre for Academic Skills and English who are responsible for assessing students recruit an alternative suitably qualified assessor to carry out assessments
- All members of the Exams team are conversant with the procedures for requesting approval with individual exam boards and arranging candidate support

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

7.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Key tasks not undertaken including:
- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams office on time, resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams office 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
 - Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet submission deadlines
 - 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

7.2 Centre Actions to Mitigate the impact of the disruption:

Where teaching staff are not available through extended absence, Heads of Departments/Schools, Senior Lecturers, Deputy Deans and/or Executive Deans will ensure all relevant actions are dealt with.

8. Invigilators – lack of appropriately trained by invigilators or invigilators absence

8.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams
- Invigilators shortage on peak exam days
- Invigilators absence on the day of the exam

8.2 Centre action

- Contact another invigilator in the first instance to cover absence on the day
- College staff would be used to cover any shortfall or absence of invigilators
- The University has an established team of invigilators who are all trained and a record of training held. On peak days, other centre staff may be co-opted to assist but only as support to an appropriately trained invigilator.

9.0 Exam rooms – lack of appropriate rooms or no rooms available

9.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Timetabling team, unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days

9.2 Centre action

- Timetabling team given priority to move classes to make suitable rooms available
- Early planning for summer exams involving the Estates team to ensure rooms are available
- Alternative provision can be sought at Birmingham Midland Institute if necessary

10. Failure of IT systems

10.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan

- MIS system failure and final entry deadlines
- MIS system failure during exams preparation
- MIS system failure at results release time

10.2 Centre actions

- Ensure systems are running as soon as possible, making these areas a priority
- Contact awarding bodies to discuss alternative way to submit data, or request extension to deadline.
- Use awarding bodies manual uploads once information has been gathered
- Results release date can be downloaded from the awarding body website to print and issue statements of entry on the release day of the results

11. Disruption of teaching time – centre closed for an extended period

11.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centre closed or candidates are unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or study support time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning

11.2 Centre actions

- Teaching will move to online provision wherever possible with an aim to ensure students do not miss taught elements and are able to complete their programme of study.

12. Centre unable to open as normal during the exams period

12.1 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 the candidates who have not been able to take scheduled examinations

12.2 Centre actions

- Contact all awarding bodies in the first instance for advice
- On demand exams would be rescheduled for an alternative day or venue
- Board set examinations to take priority over on demand examinations
- Apply for special considerations for candidates where they meet the minimum requirements and were unable to sit the examinations

13. **Candidates are unable to take examinations because of a crisis – centre remains open**

13.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates are unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

13.2 Centre actions

- Liaise with candidates and Exam boards to whether the exams can be sat at an alternative venue
- Where possible on-demand on-screen exams would be rescheduled for an alternative date or venue
- Apply for Special Considerations for candidates where they meet the minimum requirements and were unable to sit the exams

14. **Disruption in the distribution of the examination papers**

14.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts

14.2 Centre actions

- Contact the awarding bodies in the first instance to ask for advice
- Where possible parcels should be taken to a post office for special delivery to the awarding body
- Ensure scripts are kept in JCQ approved storage and arrange an alternative collection date

15. **Assessment evidence is not available to be marked**

15.1 Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Large scale damage to or destruction of completed examination scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked

15.2 Centre actions

- Provide where possible other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as agreed with the awarding body to generate marks
- Contact the awarding body for advice

16. **Centre unable to distribute results as normal**

16.1 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

16.2 Centre actions

- Use alternative venue to access results and process post results services. The University has many buildings and an alternative one could be used.
- Arrange an alternative collection venue if the problem is University-wide
- Communicate alternative arrangements to candidates
- Use awarding body websites to gain manual downloads of results which can be printed off site and distributed to candidates

Further guidance to inform and implement contingency planning

[Emergency Planning and Response for Education, Childcare and Children's Social Care Settings](#)

[Dispatch of exam scripts guide](#)

JCO

[Alternative Site Guidance Notes](#)

[Instructions for Conducting Examinations \(ICE\)](#)

[Access Arrangements, Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration](#)

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1.0	17/05/2023	RC, JP, JY, BD