

CONTINGENCY PLAN

Purpose of the plan

This plan sets out risks or issues that could potentially cause disruption to exams processes at STCG colleges. Its purpose is to mitigate the impact of any events or disruptions on examination/assessment administration and delivery and any adverse impact on students by specifying actions and procedures to be followed in such circumstances. Should a serious disruption to examinations occur, senior management are responsible for communicating applicable arrangements to students/candidates, parents and staff via the STCG website. All relevant college staff must be familiar with this plan.

Alongside internal processes, this plan is informed by:

- i) Ofqual's Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland which provides guidance in their publication *What schools, colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted*, and
- ii) JCQ's Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This plan also confirms STCG is compliant with the JCQ regulation that centres have a written contingency plan, which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will enable senior management to act immediately in the event of key staff absence and other emergencies that might affect any aspect of exam management. The contingency plan also reinforces procedures in the event of any STCG colleges being unavailable for exams or on results' days owing to an unforeseen event.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process:

1. Extended absence of key staff at significant points in the exam cycle:
 - a) Head of Exams/other key Exams staff
 - b) Principal/Head of Centre or delegated senior representative if not present in centre during exams
 - c) Access Arrangement Assessor/Co-ordinator
 - d) Teaching staff
2. Invigilators – lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence

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3. Exam rooms – lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice
4. Failure of IT systems
5. Emergency evacuation of the exam room (or college lock down)
6. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam takes place – college closed for an extended period
7. Candidates unable to take examinations because of a crisis – college remains open
8. College unable to open as normal during the exams period
9. Disruption in the distribution of exam papers
10. Disruption to the transportation of completed exam scripts
11. Assessment material not available to be marked
12. College unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria for implementation of the plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1a. HoE/key exams staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key tasks in the management and administration of the exam cycle not executed because of staff absence could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual data collection to collate information on qualifications and specifications being delivered is disrupted • annual exams plan not produced identifying essential key tasks, dates and deadlines • sufficient invigilators not recruited/identified • Entries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Principals s act immediately in the event of an emergency or if key exams staff are absent at a critical stage of the exam cycle • Allocate resource from within the same or other STCG Exams teams to provide short-term cover if possible • Consider whether there is resource in Admin areas of own and other colleges and allocate if possible • Appoint temporary (agency) cover short-term • Keep clear, accessible and up-to-date records of progress to date in each area

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 informed of exam timetables and provided with 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 verifiers • 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 for marking to awarding bodies • Results and post-results • access to exam results affecting the distribution of results to candidates • the facilitation of the post-results services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the summer exam period, have all planning and supporting paperwork ready well in advance of exam dates • Produce a recorded version of invigilator training to be available and accessible centrally to all staff <p><u>Succession Planning</u> <u>Group Head of Examinations & Assessment (GHE&A)– oversee training and development of Senior Examinations Officers to ensure they can cover GHE&A if required</u> <u>Senior Examinations Officers (SEO) – oversee training and development of Examination Officers to ensure they can cover SEO if required</u> <u>Examination Officers (EO) – provide support and oversight of Group administration staff and/or temporary staff if additional cover required.</u></p> <p><u>Staffing structure</u> <u>Group Head of Examinations and Assessment x 1</u> <u>Senior Examinations Officers x 4 (CC/MC x 1 KC x 2, STC x1)</u> <u>Examination Officers -as required based on workload at each college</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1b. Principals (Heads of Centre) not present in centres during exams 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Centre responsibilities are delegated to Duty Principals 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1c. Access Arrangement Assessor extended absence at key points in the exam cycle (or Exams staff responsible for Pre-exams points 1 and 2) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key tasks required in the management and administration of the access arrangements process not undertaken could include: 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • candidates not tested/assessed to identify potential access arrangement requirements • college 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 by the awarding body not applied for • college-delegated arrangements not put in place • modified paper requirements not identified in a timely manner to enable ordering to meet external deadline • staff providing support to access arrangement candidates not allocated and trained • Exam time • Access arrangements not applied correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Inclusive Learning acts immediately in the event of an emergency or if Access Arrangement Assessor is absent at a critical stage of the exam cycle • Allocate resource from within the same or other STCG Inclusive Learning teams to provide short-term cover if possible • Consider whether there is resource in Admin areas of STCG and allocate if possible • Appoint temporary (agency) cover short-term • Keep clear, accessible and up-to-date records of progress to date in each area • Clearly identify deadlines for all concerned and work to the same timetable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1d. Teaching staff extended absence at key points in the exam cycle 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key tasks not undertaken which could include: • Early/estimated entry information not provided to Exams on time, resulting in pre-release information not being received • Final entry information not provided to Exams on time, resulting in candidates not being entered for exams/assessments or being entered late – incurring late or other penalty fees with awarding bodies • Non-examination assessment tasks not set/issued/taken by candidates as scheduled • Candidates not informed of college assessed marks before marks are submitted to the awarding body and therefore not able to consider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exams set and publish internal deadlines for all tasks which allow time for information to be researched and provided by others in the event of staff absence • Heads of School are aware of schedules and manage staff to complete key tasks, identifying and rectifying omissions in good time • Cross-train staff to stand in for each other if necessary

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appealing internal assessment decisions and requesting a review of the college's marking Internal assessment marks and candidates' work not provided to meet awarding body submission deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish exams information and policies on STCG Online which staff are required to read, understand and comply with
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Invigilators - lack of appropriately trained invigilators or invigilator absence 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to recruit and train sufficient invigilators to conduct exams Invigilator shortage on peak exam days Invigilator absence on the day of an exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exams carry out update training on new regulations in the autumn term for existing team of invigilators Exams train Inclusive Learning and teaching staff annually to maintain a large bank of trained invigilators who can be called upon in emergencies Exams recruit to supplement bank of invigilators in the spring term and carry out training Timely, detailed planning enables invigilator numbers to be calculated correctly and booked
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venues unavailable at short notice 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exams unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exam planning stage Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident at exam time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning starts late Feb after entries are made and room requirements are identified Exams liaise with Heads of School/Section to agree release of suitable rooms according to requirements well in advance of exam days Exams check rooms for suitability Potential alternative venues identified in advance in case of need (i) other college sites within Group, e.g. Wandsworth/Tooting, Kingston main building/CIC, Merton and Carshalton (ii) other local sites (iii) public venues awarding bodies may be aware of (iv) exam and contact details kept off site for reference if necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Failure of IT and other systems – including due to potential Cyber Attack or for example electricity outage 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MIS system failure at exam entry deadlines MIS system failure during exams preparation Online exam software not updated Online exams – software failure etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entries made in advance of deadlines in case of last-minute problems Consult awarding bodies on alternative methods for making exam entries and update them if there are ongoing issues

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MIS system failure at results release time • Cyber attack – any time • Exams disrupted due to lack of power • Candidates’ work not backed-up adequately (Cloud is acceptable as 2nd (offsite) back-up option) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT backs up data every night; backups held off-site and tests have been carried out that data can be recovered • Back-ups kept of all exam planning documents off-site by Exams so they can be accessed from outside the college • IT plan software installation and upgrades into workload • IT give priority to resolving exam room issues/problems • Online exams re-scheduled as soon as possible after the failure, awarding bodies informed as necessary • Students supervised until power restored and exams can continue • Other locations identified where results can be accessed on awarding body websites for printing and distributing to students, e.g. Other STCG college sites • IT take all possible steps to prevent a cyber attack and have robust systems in place to do this • If system failure/cyber attack occurs, liaise with awarding bodies to receive guidance and minimise disruption • Cyber attack is treated as a total service outage – services restored in line with STCG Disaster Recovery Plans including reporting the attack to the NCSC. Local law enforcement and Action Fraud will be contacted as well as the DfE by emailing sector.securityenquiries@education.gov.uk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5. Emergency evacuation of the exam room or college lock down - SEE ADDENDUM TO THIS CONTINGENCY PLAN 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole college 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform awarding bodies as soon as possible and seek their advice; full reports of any incidents retained on file • Follow advice and, if necessary, invoke national Exams Contingency Days • Apply for special consideration • Identify other STCG college sites where exams could be relocated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – college closed for an extended period 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College closed or candidates unable to attend for an extended period during normal teaching or supported study time, interrupting the provision of normal teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide alternative online learning methods or additional teaching time to compensate For modular courses, advise candidates to sit examinations in an alternative series Seek advice from awarding bodies as to extension of deadlines or application of special consideration Prioritise teaching of exam classes and move to other STCG college sites if possible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Candidate unable to take examinations because of a crisis – college remains open 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidate is unable to attend the college to take exams as normal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with awarding body and apply to move exams to an alternative site (such as hospital or prison) if appropriate Apply for special consideration if eligible Postpone exams to a later series
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8. College unable to open as normal during the exam period (including in the event of the college being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential alternative venues identified in advance in case of need (i) other college sites within Group, e.g. Wandsworth/Tooting, Kingston main building/CIC. Merton & Carshalton (ii) other local sites (iii) public venues awarding bodies may be aware of (iv) exam and contact details kept off site for reference if necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Disruption in the distribution of examination papers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disruption to the distribution of examination papers to the college in advance of examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awarding bodies to provide colleges with electronic access to examination papers via a secure external network Ensure that copies are made and stored under secure conditions

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarding bodies provide guidance on the conduct of examinations in such circumstances • As a last resort, and in close collaboration with the college and regulators, awarding bodies would consider scheduling the exam to an alternative date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10. Disruption to the transportation of completed examination scripts 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed examination scripts/assessment evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where examinations are part of the national ‘yellow label’ service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, Exams seek advice from awarding bodies rather than making their own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body • For any exams where own arrangements are made for transportation, Exams investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations • Exams ensure secure storage of completed examination papers until collection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarding bodies to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement as defined by the awarding body • Where marks cannot be generated by awarding bodies candidates may need to retake affected assessment in a subsequent assessment series
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12. College unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post results services (including in the event of the college being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STCG college(s) unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of results: • HoE makes arrangements to access results at an alternative STCG college site, in agreement with the relevant awarding body

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HoE makes arrangements to coordinate access to post results services from an alternative STCG college site • HoE shares facilities with other STCG colleges if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding body. • Facilitation of post results services: • HoE makes arrangements to make post results requests at an alternative STCG college location • HoE contacts the relevant awarding body if electronic post results requests are not possible
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Further sources of Guidance and Information

Ofqual - guidance provided in the Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - What schools and colleges and other colleges should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted (updated September 2022) <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 - guidance provided in Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2023-2024 <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/>

JCQ Joint Contingency Plan www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents

General Regulations for Approved Colleges 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

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>

National Counter Terrorism Security Office

Procedures for handling bomb threats www.gov.uk/government/publications/bomb-threats-guidance/procedures-for-handling-bomb-threats

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