QUALIFICATIONS CIOL

Contingency and Adverse Effects Policy

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Introduction and purpose

The purpose of this policy is to minimise the disruption to CIOL Qualifications (CIOLQ) assessment delivery and to safeguard the interests of candidates while maintaining the integrity of the exam system, thus preventing any adverse effect.

In the event of major system disruptions caused by widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather, or power failures, CIOLQ may need advice on recommended courses of action from official external agencies such as the Police, Environment Agency, or Health Protection Agency. Details of these are found within our internal Business Continuity Policy.

CIOLQ will take steps to minimise the occurrence or likelihood of an occurrence which could have an 'Adverse Effect' and an Event Notification will be submitted to Ofqual by the Responsible Officer.

Scope

For the scenarios, stakeholders include candidates, teachers, exam venue staff, parents, carers, Awarding Organisation staff, couriers' staff and exam invigilators.

Please note that exam venue staff in these scenarios refer to members of staff who are administering assessments.

Priorities

The priority for CIOLQ when implementing contingencies will be to maintain these principles:

- Delivering assessments to published timetables
- Delivering results to published timetables
- Complying with regulatory requirements in relation to assessment, marking and standards
- Maintaining business as usual in the event of circumstances beyond our control

If the usual CIOLQ contingencies are no longer sufficient to maintain these outcomes, an identified Crisis Management Team consisting of representatives of all organisations involved will be convened by Ofqual to agree on the additional actions required.

In the event of a major disruption CIOLQ will:

- Follow the CIOL Business Continuity Plan
- Inform the affected staff and users of our qualifications by email and/or telephone, as appropriate, within one working day of notice of the disruption taking place
- Following identification of the disruption caused and the contingency measures being implemented, CIOLQ will document agreed actions and deadlines within five working days of the disruption
- Conduct a review of the outcomes of any actions taken, note lessons learned and the implications for any other policies and processes
- Communicate with users of our qualifications and/or those impacted by any plan moving forward, should the disruption be longer term and sustained over some time

Adverse Effects Committee (AEC)

To support this contingency policy and reduce the occurrence of adverse effects, CIOLQ will operate an Adverse Effects Committee that meets weekly.

The committee consists of the Responsible Officer, Head of Qualifications and relevant Managers.

The committee reviews and discusses the incident logs to identify any potential adverse effect that requires reporting to the Regulators. Each entry is risk-rated and actions are agreed upon collectively by the Panel. This includes consideration of any external or internal impact and the communication required.

The Panel will seek to ensure that CIOLQ will consider whether an event:

- Poses a potential risk of occurring
- Increases the organisation's risk level

They will then convene to agree on the course of action through collective agreement and decide on whether there is a need to raise an event notification to the regulators.

Potential adverse effects caused internally or externally:

1. Error in CIOLQ assessment materials
2. Loss or theft of, or breach of confidentiality regarding, and or all assessment materials
3. Inability to supply assessment materials for a scheduled date
4. Failure in the delivery of an assessment which threatens Assessors/Examiners to differentiate accurately and consistently across levels of attainment
5. Inability to meet a published date for the issue of results or certificates
6. CIOLQ have issued incorrect results or certificates
7. Evidence of malpractice resulting in termination of Exam Venue approval
8. Major disruption to assessment conditions at the time of an exam
9. Candidates unable to sit for exams at the scheduled exam venue due to exceptional circumstances
10. Belief that there has been an incident of malpractice and/or maladministration, either of which could invalidate the award of a qualification which it makes available
11. CIOLQ have increased costs significantly above the rate of inflation
12. CIOLQ is named as a party in a criminal or civil proceeding or subjected to a regulatory investigation or sanction by any professional, regulatory or government body
13. A Senior Officer is a party to criminal proceedings or disqualification as a Company Director

Exam Venue responsibilities

CIOLQ will expect all Exam Venues to have in place a robust Contingency Policy and plan which must be available and may be subject to validation at any time, whether during a quality visit or remote audit.

Excerpt from Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ)

The exam contingency plan/exam policy should cover all aspects of exam administration. It will allow senior leaders to implement a robust contingency plan, minimising risk to exam administration and any adverse impact on students, should the head of the exam venue, relevant senior leader(s), exam officer or any other key staff essential to the exam process be absent at a critical stage of the assessment cycle.

To reduce bureaucracy and burden, we will not specify a particular format or template. We believe that senior leaders are best placed to determine their own exam contingency plan/exam policy.

The Joint contingency plan for the exams system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, can be downloaded from the Gov.UK website and now has additions relating to Covid contingencies, which may be useful:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

It will provide a framework for senior leaders to build and shape a plan/policy in light of their local circumstances.

Scenarios

Below are specific scenarios set out in the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) Joint Contingency Plan in the event of widespread disruption to the exam system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland where contingency plans would be invoked. The scenarios set out how an exam would be planned and delivered, from issuing scripts to offering post-results services.
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland

Contingency planning

Further comprehensive guidance on emergency and contingency planning can be found on Gov.UK
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 Scenarios

Each scenario sets out the following information:

- Criteria for implementation of the plan
- Recommended actions
- Further guidance

1. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam – centres are closed for an extended period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centres are 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

Recommended actions:

- Where there is disruption to teaching time and students miss teaching and learning, it remains the responsibility of centres to prepare students, as usual, for exams

- In the case of modular courses, centres may advise candidates to sit exams in an alternative series
- Centres should have plans in place to facilitate alternative methods of learning

Guidance on emergency planning, with advice on severe weather is available at:

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

2. Disruption in the distribution of exam papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Disruption to the distribution of exam papers to centres in advance of exams

Recommended actions:

- Awarding organisations to source alternative couriers for delivery of hard copies
- Awarding organisations to change the timing of the distribution to earlier or later than originally scheduled
- Awarding organisations to provide centres with electronic access to exam papers via a secure external network. Centres would need to ensure that copies are received, made and stored under secure conditions and should have plans in place to facilitate such an action. Awarding organisations would provide guidance on the conduct of exams in such circumstances
- As a last resort, and in close collaboration with centres and regulators, awarding organisations to consider scheduling any affected exam(s) on an alternative date

3. Candidates unable to take exams because of a crisis - centres remain open

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Candidates are unable to attend exam centres to take exams as normal

Recommended actions:

- Centres to invoke centre contingency plan. **This must focus on options that enable candidates to take their exams**
- Information on what schools and colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted can be found here:

  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

- Awarding organisations will ensure that any applications for special considerations as a result of disruption will be reviewed across awarding organisations to ensure consistency of decision making

4. Centres are unable to open as normal during the exam period

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centres unable to open as normal for scheduled exams

Recommended actions:

- Centres to invoke centre contingency plan, **which must focus on options that enable candidates to take their exams.** As part of their general planning for emergencies, centres should cover the impact on exams. The responsibility for deciding whether it is safe for a centre to open lies with the head of centre. The head is responsible for taking advice or following instructions from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether their centre is able to open

Information on what schools, colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted can be found here:

- 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
- Awarding organisations will ensure that any applications for Special Consideration(s) as a result of disruption will be reviewed across awarding organisations to ensure consistency of decision-making

5. Disruption to transportation of completed exam papers

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Delay in normal collection arrangements for completed exam scripts/assessment evidence

Recommended actions:

- Where exams are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding organisations arrange collections, centres should seek advice from awarding organisations and should not make their own arrangements for transportation, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation
- For any exams where centres make their own arrangements for transportation, centres should investigate alternative dispatch options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ Instructions for Conducting Examinations
- Centres to ensure secure storage of completed exam papers until collection

6. Assessment evidence is not available to be marked

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Large scale damage to, or destruction of, completed exam scripts/assessment evidence before it can be marked
- Completed exam scripts/assessment evidence does not reach awarding organisations

Recommended actions:

- Awarding organisations to generate candidate marks for affected assessments based on other appropriate evidence of candidate achievement, as defined by the awarding organisations
- Where marks cannot be generated by awarding organisations, candidates may need to retake affected assessments in a subsequent assessment series

7. Disruption to the scanning process – where completed exam papers are being scanned in preparation for on-screen marking

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- The scanning process disrupted beyond acceptable levels, resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates

Recommended actions:

- Awarding organisations to implement their existing contingency plans for disruption to the on-screen marking process
- Awarding organisations to revert to alternative forms of marking
- Prioritisation of scanning to be based on scheduled results release dates

8. Markers unable to mark exam papers according to marking schedules

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Markers are unable to mark exam papers, resulting in a risk to the delivery of results by scheduled dates

Recommended actions:

- Awarding organisations to re-allocate scripts to available markers
- Awarding organisations to recruit, train or re-standardise qualified additional markers
- Awarding organisations to consider the proportion of marking required to be completed for grade boundary setting
- Prioritisation of marking to be based on scheduled result release dates

9. Difficulty in meeting results schedule

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Significant inability to meet the schedule for publication of results

Recommended actions:

- Awarding organisations must notify the regulators of any such instance
- Awarding organisations to establish priorities for results processing
- Awarding organisations to implement existing contingency plans for disruption to the results processing schedule
- Awarding organisations to assess the level of disruption and consider options for issuing results in an alternative format(s)
- Awarding organisations and regulators liaise with relevant organisations (i.e. UCAS, CAO) regarding the process of candidate progression to further and higher education

10. Awarding organisations unable to issue results as planned

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Awarding organisations are unable to distribute electronic results, due to the failure of any system(s) that facilitate results delivery
- Awarding organisations are unable to distribute hardcopy results in line with scheduled results release dates

Recommended actions:

Where results are due to be issued electronically:

- Awarding organisations to implement existing contingency plans for disruption to the issuing of results
- Awarding organisations transmit results via alternative electronic formats
- Awarding organisations issue hardcopy results

Where results are due to be issued in hardcopy:

- Awarding organisations to facilitate communication of results via secure web-based platforms

11. Centres are unable to distribute results as normal or facilitate post-results services

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Centres are unable to access or manage the distribution of results to candidates, or to facilitate post-results services

Recommended actions:

Distribution of results:

- Centre to make arrangements to access its results at an alternative site, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation
- Centres to make arrangements to coordinate access to post-results services from an alternative site
- Centres to share facilities with other centres, if this is possible, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation

Facilitation of post-results services:

- Centre to make arrangements to make post-results requests at an alternative location
- Centres to contact the relevant awarding organisation if electronic post-results requests are not possible
- Awarding organisations to review the post-results deadlines

Appendix A - Summary of responsibilities in the event of disruption to exams

JCQ is responsible for coordinating across awarding organisations, including convening the Crisis Management Team.

Regulators (Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA Accreditation in Northern Ireland) are responsible for sharing timely and accurate information, as required with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

Awarding organisations are responsible for:	Exam centres are responsible for:
	Preparing plans for any disruption to exams as part of centres' general emergency planning
Ensuring centres receive exam materials for scheduled exams	Preparing candidates for exams
	Ensuring exams and assessments are taken under the conditions prescribed by awarding organisations
	Ensuring, where relevant, that assessment materials and candidate work are stored under secure conditions
	Deciding whether the centre can open for exams as scheduled and informing relevant awarding organisations if the centre is unable to open
Advising centres on possible alternative exam arrangements and declining/approving proposals for alternative exam arrangements	Exploring the opportunities for alternative arrangements if the centre cannot open for exams and agreeing such arrangements with the awarding organisations
Evaluating and declining/approving requests for Special Consideration	Judging whether candidates meet the requirements for special consideration as a result of any disruption and submitting these requests to the relevant awarding organisations
	Assessing and liaising with awarding organisations in the event of disruption to the transportation of exam papers
Marking, moderating and grading candidate work	
Issuing results to centres on scheduled dates	The distribution of exam results to candidates

Useful documents

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
https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/
https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations

Other related CIOLQ policies and documents

Other related CIOLQ policies and documents can be found on the CIOL website here.

Reference and acknowledgement

This contingency policy has been prepared using the guidance from the Joint Contingency Plan (JCP) in the event of widespread disruption to the exam system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Policy updating and reviewing

All policies relating to CIOLQ will be updated on an 18-month cycle or sooner as required.

Policy version and owner

Policy review date	April 2026
Policy owner	Responsible Officer

Regulatory references

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition A6: Identification and management of risks Condition A7: Management of incidents
Qualifications Wales
Condition A6: Identification and management of risks Condition A7: Management of incidents