



Policy Document

Contingency and adverse effects policy

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Introduction and purpose

The purpose of this policy is to minimise the disruption to Aspire Qualifications (AQ) and safeguard the interests of learners while maintaining the integrity of the assessment and reducing the possibility of any Adverse Effect from arising.

AQ expects that the majority of assessment should go ahead whatever the external or internal influences or disruptions which may affect the normal way of working. We will always work with centres to understand how best to proceed and will take a risk-based approach at all times.

In the event of major disruption to systems caused by widespread illness, travel disruption, bad weather or power failures AQ may need to seek advice or escalate the problem to official external agencies such as the police, Environment Agency or Health Protection Agency.

In the event that an adverse effect occurs or is likely to occur, AQ will take steps to minimise it and will raise an Event Notification to Ofqual.

Scope

This policy is for reference by all stakeholders which include centres, learners and others including staff and associates.

Whilst much of the instructions in this policy relates more to externally set and taken examinations, the information contained can assist approved centres with arrangements across the examination/assessment system as a whole.

Please note that all approved centres must have in place their own contingency policy and plan for their learners. AQ are only involved in mitigating any disruption to the submission of summative assessments. As part of normal centre monitoring activity, we may request to see copies of policies and procedures relating to the operations, assessment and IQA of assessment practices.

Adverse Effects Committee (AEC)

To support this contingency policy and manage and mitigate the occurrence of adverse effects, AQ will operate an Adverse Effects Committee that convenes regularly.

The committee consists of the Responsible Officer and relevant Managers.



The committee reviews and discusses any incident which has been identified and recorded on the incident log. 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 consideration is given to any occurrence/ log entry as to whether it poses a risk to learners or increases the organisation's risk level. Consideration will also be given to whether the need to communicate to other awarding organisations.

The course of action will be decided after detailed discussion and collective decision making aimed at deciding whether there is a need to raise an event notification to the regulators.

Potential adverse effects caused internally or externally:

- Error in assessment materials
- Loss or theft of, or breach of confidentiality regarding, and or all assessment materials
- Inability to supply assessment materials for a scheduled date
- Failure in the delivery of an assessment which threatens assessors to differentiate accurately and consistently across levels of attainment
- Inability to meet a published date for the issue of results or certificates
- Issue of incorrect results or certificates
- Evidence of malpractice resulting in termination of centre approval
- Major disruption to assessment conditions at the time of an assessment
- Learners unable to submit assessment at the scheduled date to exceptional circumstances
- Evidence 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
- Fees have been increased significantly above the rate of inflation
- AQ 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
- An AQ Senior Officer is a party to criminal proceedings or disqualification as a Company Director

Summative assessment

If the assessment cannot meet the submission windows due to the following reasons AQ will support centres and their learners to ensure any contingent decisions are safe and efficient.



For example, in the event of unplanned and extenuating circumstances:

- Closure of either an employer's site or closure of a provider's site where the EPA was to take place
- Regional lockdown or travel restrictions

AQ aim to carry out the following actions in the event that disruption occurs:

- If major national disruptions arise that are unavoidable, then the individual action taken will be implemented on a case-by-case basis and in line with published advice and guidance
- If an assessment window is cancelled due to widescale disruption the assessment fee will be transferred to the available and appropriate assessment window

Staff and Associates

Business continuity is essential to make sure that AQ is able to provide a consistent, high-quality service to approved centres and their learners despite any events that might impact activity.

Our approach to contingent measures is to maintain staff development, training and induction to expand skills and knowledge across the team in the event that they need to step into other roles, alongside their own, for a short period of time.

In cases whereby AQ staff and associates are unable to work due to sudden illness, injury or compassionate leave, AQ will put in place contingent measures and back up staff to fulfil business critical roles so that the operations are not affected.

Whilst these contingency measures are temporary it enables us to continue to operate particularly in the event that a vacancy requires filling at short notice.

In terms of the role of Responsible Officer (RO), should the RO be unexpectedly unable to work, there will be a staff member already deputising as required.

Priorities

The priority for Sheldrake when implementing contingencies will be to maintain the following activities as a minimum:

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

In the event of a major disruption (lockdown, *force majeure*), AQ will:

- Reference our Risk Policy, Risk Register and Business Continuity Plan with reference as appropriate to our Business Continuity Scenarios
- Inform the affected staff and stakeholders by email or telephone, as appropriate and as soon as possible but at the latest within one working day of notice of the disruption taking place
- Following review of the disruption caused and the contingency measures required, record agreed actions and as soon as possible after the disruption
- Conduct a review of the outcomes of any contingent actions taken and the implications for changes to associated policies and processes
- Communicate with stakeholders in relation to any change in plan going forward should the disruption be longer term and sustained over a period of weeks or months

Our first priority is to the learners and we will work with approved centres to seek a solution in the event of any disruption.

Policy updating and reviewing

We monitor our policies on an ongoing basis to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and responsive.

All policies relating to AQ will be updated on an 18-month cycle or sooner as required. Earlier policy updates will take place in response to any regulatory change, resulting legislation or feedback received, that dictates the need to conduct an earlier review.

Our policy review process also forms part of AQ's continuous improvement monitoring and self-assessment arrangements.

Policy version and owner

Policy version	December 2024
Policy review date	July 2026
Policy owner	Responsible Officer
Regulatory references	Condition A6: Identification and management of risks Condition A7: Management of incidents

Appendix A References

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.

[What schools, colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted](#)

Preparing for disruptions to examinations

<https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/preparing-for-disruption-to-examinations/>

In the event of disruption

The Exam System Contingency Plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exam-system-contingency-plan-england-wales-and-northern-ireland>

Guidance: What schools, colleges and other centres should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted

<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>

Summary of responsibilities in the event of disruption to exams

https://www.jcq.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Disruption_Planning_24_FINAL.pdf

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
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