



**St Edward's
School**

Unity - Achievement - Faith

Examination Contingency Policy

Reviewed and Approved by the Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Curriculum Committee

On: 08 October 2025

Reviewed and Ratified by the Full Governing

On: 4th December 2025

Next review date: Autumn 2026

SLT is responsible for oversight of this policy's implementation

Mission Statement

MAY WE BE ONE

In purpose – educating for life in all its fullness

In faith – encountering God who lives among us, calling us to unity

In dignity – nurturing confidence and maturity

In community – striving together for justice, love and peace

Our Mission Statement affirms our desire to educate students for life in all its fullness. Examinations are an important part of reflecting the achievement of students. They are not the only element in such recognition, however, and we set out to maintain a balanced perspective – recognising the unique attributes of every student, called as they are, to make their contribution to the world around us.

Purpose of the plan

This plan examines potential risks and issues that could cause disruption to the exam process.

By outlining actions/procedures to be invoked in case of disruption it is intended to mitigate the impact these disruptions have on our exam process at St. Edward's School.

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 centers should do if exams or other assessments are seriously disrupted' and the **JCQ Joint Contingency Plan** for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

This plan details how St. Edward's School complies with the JCQ's **General Regulations for Approved Centers** (section 5.3, Centre management) by having in place a written examination contingency plan which covers all aspects of examination administration. This will allow members of the senior leadership team to act immediately in the event of an emergency or staff absence. The examination contingency plan should reinforce procedures in the event of the center being unavailable for examinations, or on results day, owing to an unforeseen emergency. The potential impact of a cyber-attack should also be considered.

Possible causes of disruption to the exam process

1. Exams Manager absence at key points in the exam process (exam 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

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 exams
- exam timetabling, rooming allocation; and invigilation schedules not prepared
- candidates not briefed on exam timetables and 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 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, for example very late arrival, suspected malpractice, special consideration
- candidates' scripts not dispatched as required for marking to awarding bodies

Results and post-results:

- access to examination results affecting the distribution of results to candidates
- the facilitation of post-results services

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Exams Manager to provide and confirm detailed data on entries and estimated entries
- Exams Manager to receive, check and store securely all exam papers and completed scripts with confirmation from Exams Assistant
- Exams Manager to advise the SLT, subject and class tutors and other relevant support staff on annual exam timetables and application procedures as set by the various exam boards
- Exams Manager to submit candidates' coursework marks, tracks despatch and stores returned coursework and any other material required by the appropriate awarding bodies correctly and on schedule
- Exams Manager to prepare and present reports to the SLT showing results achieved in relation to expected grades and comparable data for previous years
- Exams Manager submits candidates' coursework marks, tracks despatch and stores returned coursework and any other material required by the appropriate awarding bodies correctly and on schedule
- Exams Manager to arrange for dissemination of exam results and certificates to candidates and forwards, in consultation with the SLT, any appeals/re-mark requests

- Exams Manager details all of the above to subject leaders, so they are responsible for students. Subject leaders have permission to enter and submit course work and NEA grades on AB websites
- Access to Exams Organiser SIMS granted to Exams Assistant, Head of SIMS communication and Subject leader of IT who are experienced and understand Exams Organiser SIMS.

2. ALS lead/SENCo extended absence at key points in the exam process (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

Other criteria:

- Students with access arrangement needs identified after the application for Access Arrangements and/or Modified Papers deadline

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Review student needs and identify students who may have additional needs by communicating with SENCo and teachers/tutors of Year 10 and Year 11 to ensure all access arrangements and needs have been met and considered
- Work with Exams Assistant to ensure adequate number of rooms and invigilators are available for students outside main exam room
- SENCo and teachers communicate to identify students working in a different way and measures put in place to allow access to lessons

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

Criteria for implementation of the plan

Key tasks not undertaken including:

- Early/estimated entry information not provided to the exams manager on time; resulting in pre-release information not being received
- Final entry information not provided to the exams manager 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 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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

Ensure all there is no single point of failure by:

- Ensuring the class and year group information is readily accessible on SIMS Subject leaders have knowledge of KS4 classes and tiers where applicable
- Exams Manager keep in communication with and notify teachers of advanced information and NEA dates, help to set dates and times for these to take place and ensure they are entered before submission dates
- Schedule these on the main exam timetable through SIMS as with other exams

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

Other criteria:

- High number of students with access arrangements that require individual invigilation or small group invigilation, such as readers, scribes and practical assistants

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Exams Manager is responsible for organising the recruitment, training and monitoring of a team of exams invigilators responsible for the conduct of exams
- Exams manager to hold a "catch up" session in October or November to go over changes to ICE and goals for the year
- Exams manager to hold a training session for new invigilators or a refresher course in April/May before Summer Exams begin. Make use of The Exams Office Invigilator training and testing

- Train Cover Supervisors and Teaching Assistants to invigilate exams and to be readers, scribes and practical assistants

5. Exam rooms - lack of appropriate rooms or main venue(s) unavailable at short notice

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- Exams manager unable to identify sufficient/appropriate rooms during exams timetable planning
- Insufficient rooms available on peak exam days
- Main exam venues unavailable due to an unexpected incident (such as flooding) at exam time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- (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 venue details:

Sixth Form Common Room (X1)

Sixth Form Study Hall (X2)

School Hall and Canteen

Dance Studio

Outside school grounds – St. George' s Church Hall

- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or venue
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue
- ensure the secure transportation of question papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue
- (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

Other centre actions:

- Attempt to arrange seating as close to original seating as possible
- Use the same access or separate invigilation exam rooms, if not affected by incident

6. Cyber-attack

Criteria for implementation of the plan

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

Other criteria:

- Where a cyber-attack may compromise any aspect of results receipt and/or delivery to students

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Notify JCQ and the relevant exam board immediately
- Notify Parcel Force immediately
- Ensuring that all guidance about cyber security procedures are in place
- Train staff on cyber security annually

7. Failure of IT systems

Criteria for implementation of the plan

- MIS/IT system failure at final entry deadline
- MIS/IT system failure during exams preparation
- MIS/IT system failure at results release time

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- Consult with IT and test the school's network and internet to ensure it is in working order in the days leading up to exams and results days
- Look to an alternate location to hold exams and access internet
- Ensure that candidates' work is backed-up
- Ensure the IT team are on site and available on results day
- ESS phone numbers and online contacts available
- Train staff on cyber security annually

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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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

Other centre actions:

- Follow the school's full evacuation plan for fire, lockdown and bomb threats.

9. Disruption of teaching time in the weeks before an exam - 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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

Communication details:

- Teachers to teach online using Microsoft Teams
- Assignments set and handed in on Microsoft Teams, as this is the normal way of working for home learning
- Communication sent by school email, on school website and social media and by the SIMS parent app

The Centre will also:

- 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.

10. Candidates at risk of being unable to take examinations - centre remains open

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- Candidates at risk of being unable to attend the examination centre to take examinations as normal

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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
- 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
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Communication details:

- Communication sent by school email and by the SIMS parent app

11. Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal during the examination period (including in the event of the centre being unavailable for examinations owing to an unforeseen emergency)

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

- Centre at risk of being unable to open as normal for scheduled examinations

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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
- 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
- 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
- communicate with candidates (and where appropriate, parents/carers) any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue

Alternative venue details:

local primary schools, leisure centre - to be confirmed

Communication details:

Communication sent by school email and by the SIMS parent app

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

Other criteria:

- Incorrect number of examination papers sent
- Modified papers not sent or available online

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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

Other centre actions:

- Allow contingency for Exams Assistant to print exam papers with reprographics to minimise delay
- Allow contingency for SENCo to assist with copying papers onto coloured paper or to enlarge papers to minimise delay

13. Disruption to transporting completed examination scripts

Criteria for implementation of the plan:

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

Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed on page 10.

The centre will:

- where examinations are part of the national 'yellow label' service or where awarding bodies arrange collections, contact the relevant awarding bodies for advice and instructions and will not make its own arrangements for transportation unless told to do so by the awarding body.
- for any examinations where the centre makes its own collection arrangements, investigate alternative options that comply with the requirements detailed in the JCQ publication 'Instructions for Conducting Examinations'
- ensure the secure storage of completed examination scripts until collection

Other centre actions:

- Exams Manager to take scripts to post office and have them posted as soon as possible, with receipt of postage

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

Other criteria:

- Word processor scripts are not within with the student's exam paper Centre actions to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- 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

Other centre actions:

- Teachers to keep mock exam papers and expected grading information as evidence of candidate achievement
- Keep word processed scripts on password protected file or USB, as per JCQ reg 2022/2023

15. Centre unable to distribute results as normal (including in the event of the centre being unavailable on results day owing to an unforeseen emergency) 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 to mitigate the impact of the disruption listed above

The centre will:

- make arrangements to access its results at an alternative venue/share facility 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
- Alternative venue details: local primary schools, secondary schools (Magna Academy), local leisure centre - to be confirmed
- 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 Communication details:
- Communication sent by school email and by the SIMS parent app

Appendix One:

Key Staff Involved in the Plan:

Role	Name(s)
Head of Centre	Chris Barnett
Senior Leaders	Sara Sinaguglia, Ian Henry, Victoria Pirie, Chris Farrow, Stuart Keene, Matt Leonarduzzi & Gordon Staines
Exams Manager	Alexis Webster
ALS Lead / SENCO	David Dawson

Appendix Two:

Further guidance to inform procedures and implement contingency planning

OFQUAL

Contingency planning

You should prepare for possible disruption to exams and other assessments and make sure staff are aware of these plans.

General contingency guidance

- emergency planning and response (www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings) from the Department for Education in England
- school organisation: local-authority-maintained schools from the Department for Education in England ([www.gov.uk/government/publications /school -organisation-maintained-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools))
- bomb threats procedures for handling bomb threats from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (www.gov.uk/government/publications/crowded-places-guidance/bomb-threats)

Disruption to assessments or exams

In the absence of any instruction from the relevant awarding organisation, you should make sure that any exam or timetabled assessment takes place if it is possible to hold it. This may mean relocating to alternative premises. You should discuss alternative arrangements with your awarding organisation if:

- the exam or assessment cannot take place
- a student misses an exam or loses their assessment due to an emergency, or other event, outside of the student's control

See also the JCQ Joint Contingency Plan for the Examination System in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/other-documents/jcq-joint-contingency-plan/)

Steps you should take

Exam planning

Review contingency plans well in advance of each exam or assessment series. Consider how, if the contingency plan is invoked, you will comply with the awarding organisation's requirements.

In the event of disruption

1. Contact the relevant awarding organisation and follow its instructions.
2. Take advice, or follow instructions, from relevant local or national agencies in deciding whether your centre is able to open.
3. Identify whether the exam or timetabled assessment can be sat at an alternative venue, in agreement with the relevant awarding organisation, ensuring the secure transportation of questions papers or assessment materials to the alternative venue.
4. Where accommodation is limited, prioritise students whose progression will be severely delayed if they do not take their exam or timetabled assessment when planned.
5. In the event of an evacuation during an examination please refer to JCQ's 'Centre emergency evacuation procedure' (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/).
6. Communicate with parents, carers and students any changes to the exam or assessment timetable or to the venue.
7. Communicate with any external assessors or relevant third parties regarding any changes to the exam or assessment timetable.

After the exam

1. Consider whether any students' ability to take the assessment or demonstrate their level of attainment has been materially affected and, if so, apply for special consideration.
2. Advise students, where appropriate, of the opportunities to take their exam or assessment at a later date.
3. Ensure that scripts are stored under secure conditions.
4. Return scripts to awarding organisations in line with their instructions. Never make alternative arrangements for the transportation of completed exam scripts, unless told to do so by the awarding organisation.

Steps the awarding organisation should take

Exam planning

1. Establish and maintain, and at all times comply with, an up-to-date, written contingency plan.

2. Ensure that the arrangements in place with centres and other third parties enable them to deliver and award qualifications in accordance with their conditions of recognition.

In the event of disruption

1. Take all reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse effect, in relation to their qualifications, arising from any disruption.
2. Provide effective guidance to any of their centres delivering qualifications.
3. Ensure that where an assessment must be completed under specified conditions, students complete the assessment under those conditions (other than where any reasonable adjustments or special considerations require alternative conditions).
4. Promptly notify the relevant regulators about any event which could have an adverse effect on students, standards or public confidence.
5. Coordinate its communications with the relevant regulators where the disruption has an impact on multiple centres or a wide range of learners.

After the exam

Consider any requests for special consideration for affected students. For example, those who may have lost their internally assessed work or whose performance in assessments or exams could have been affected by the disruption.

If any students miss an exam or are disadvantaged by the disruption

If some of the students have been adversely affected by the disruption, you should ask the awarding organisation about applying for special consideration.

Decisions about special consideration, when it is or is not appropriate, is for each awarding organisation to make. Their decisions might be different for different qualifications and for different subjects.

See also JCQ's guidance on special considerations (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration/) Wider communications

The regulators, Ofqual in England, Qualifications Wales in Wales and CCEA Regulation in Northern Ireland, will share timely and accurate information, as required, with awarding organisations, government departments and other stakeholders.

The Department for Education in England, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland and the Welsh Government will inform the relevant government ministers as soon as it becomes apparent that there will be significant local or national disruption; and ensure that they are kept updated until the matter is resolved.

Awarding organisations will alert the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Central Applications Office (CAO) about any impact of the disruption on their deadlines and liaise regarding student progression to further and higher education.

Awarding organisations will alert relevant professional bodies or employer groups if the impact of disruption particularly affects them. Widespread national disruption to the taking of examinations or assessments

As education is devolved, in the event of any widespread sustained national disruption to examinations or assessments, national government departments will communicate with regulators, awarding organisations and centres prior to a public announcement. Regulators will provide advice to government departments on implications for exam timetables.

JCQ

JCQ guidance taken directly from Instructions for Conducting Examinations 2022-2023 (www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/ice---instructions-for-conducting-examinations/) section 15, Contingency planning

15.1 The qualification regulators, awarding bodies and government departments responsible for education have prepared and agreed information for schools and colleges in the event of examinations being seriously disrupted. This jointly agreed information will ensure consistency of response in the event of major disruption to the examinations system affecting significant numbers of candidates.

15.2 In addition, awarding bodies have their own well-established contingency plans in place to respond to disruptions. It is important that exams managers who are facing disruption liaise directly with the relevant awarding body/bodies.

15.3 Centres should prepare plans for any disruption to examinations as part of their general emergency planning. It is important to ensure that relevant centre staff are familiar with the plan. Consideration should be given as to how these arrangements will be communicated to candidates, parents and staff should disruption to examinations occur.

15.4 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.

15.5 The awarding bodies will designate 'contingency days' for examinations, summer 2025. This is consistent with the qualification regulators' document Exam system contingency plan: England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The designation of 'contingency days' within the common examination timetable is in the event of national or significant local disruption to examinations. It is part of the awarding bodies' standard contingency planning for examinations.

In the event that there is national disruption to a day of examinations in summer 2025, the awarding bodies will liaise with the qualification regulators and government departments to agree the most appropriate option for managing the impact. As a last resort the affected examinations will be rescheduled. Although every effort would be taken to keep the impact to a minimum, it is possible that there could be more than one timetable date affected following the disruption, up to and including the last contingency day. Centres will be alerted if it was agreed to reschedule the examinations and the affected candidates will be expected to make themselves available in such circumstances. The decision regarding the re-scheduling of examinations will always rest with the awarding body. The centre must conduct the examination on the scheduled date unless instructed to do otherwise by the awarding body.

Where candidates choose not to be available for the rescheduled examination(s) for reasons other than those traditionally covered by special consideration, they will not be eligible for enhanced grading arrangements. Centres must therefore ensure candidates and parents are aware of the contingency arrangements so that they may take them into account when making their plans for the summer. However, the awarding bodies will not insist upon candidates being available throughout the entire timetable period as a matter of course.