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<b>Name:</b>	<b>Policy on Unscheduled Closure and/or Cancellation of Classes</b>
Policy Number:	5-1002
Origin:	Task Force on Closure and Cancellation of Classes
Approved:	August 10, 2004
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Responsibility:	Vice-President, Finance & Administration
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## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy document is:
  - (a) to establish guidelines for the decision-making process that may lead to closure or cancellation;
  - (b) to establish protocols for communicating a closure decision once made; and
  - (c) to outline procedures to be followed at such a time.
- 1.2 Although this policy has been developed primarily for closings due to hazardous weather conditions, it will also be followed in the event of any other conditions that require the closing or partial closing of the University such as utilities failure. Thus, the policy developed here will maintain a degree of flexibility in order to handle the essential nature of emergency situations, which are unique and may arrive unexpectedly.

## **2.0 Scope**

- 2.1 This policy is applicable University-wide.

## **3.0 Authority**

- 3.1 The decision to close/partially close the University or cancel classes is the responsibility of the President (or designate) after consideration of all relevant information available as per Section 8.

## **4.0 Closure/Partial Closure**

- 4.1 The University will close when there is a situation that makes it extremely difficult or dangerous for faculty, staff or students to inhabit University facilities, remain at, or travel to the University.

- 4.2 In addition to Section 4.1, the University will close when the President determines that closure is appropriate in the circumstances.
- 4.3 Partial closures of the campus (i.e. selected buildings) may take place from time to time and may result in staff being moved to other facilities on campus.
- 4.4 The University may close for part of the day to allow for the clearing of parking lots and to give individuals more time to reach the campus.

## **5.0 Cancellation of Classes**

- 5.1 In some circumstances, where it is deemed safe to remain open, it may be decided to cancel some or all classes.
- 5.2 Where classes have been cancelled but the University remains open, all employees will make reasonable efforts to fulfill their regularly scheduled responsibilities at the University.
- 5.3 Extension classes offered through the Sobey School of Business are held at various off-campus locations. In some circumstances, classes at extension centres may be cancelled due to the closure of those facilities, while the SMU campus remains unaffected. Alternatively, circumstances may allow classes to be held at extension centres, while the SMU campus is closed.
- 5.4 Cancelled classes will be addressed in accordance with the [Senate Policy on the Academic Implications of Disruptions of University Business \(8-1008\)](#).

## **6.0 Cancelled Examinations**

- 6.1 Cancelled formal examinations will be rescheduled in accordance with the [Senate Policy on Final Examinations \(8-1016\)](#).

## **7.0 Timing**

- 7.1 Every effort will be made to communicate a firm decision as early as possible, taking into consideration that many staff work evening, or weekend/holiday shifts.
- 7.2 Our goal is to communicate a decision whether to open as usual or cancel classes/close the University by:

Daytime Operations	6:00 AM
Evening operations	3:00 PM

## **8.0 Determining Factors**

- 8.1 The safety of our students, staff and faculty is of paramount importance.
- 8.2 Factors contributing to the decision to close/partially close the University or cancel classes include:
  - (a) State of emergency or impending state of emergency;
  - (b) Weather conditions (current and forecasted);
  - (c) Road conditions;
  - (d) Availability of public transport;

- (e) Ability to access and use the campus safely;
- (f) Ability to maintain campus roadways, parking lots, paths, stairs and building entrances in safe condition;
- (g) Ability of emergency services to access the campus;
- (h) Disadvantages of sending individuals back into the weather once they have arrived on campus; and
- (i) Anticipation that conditions will worsen or persist such that public transportation may not operate or roads may be closed as a result of storm conditions, which will make travel home unusually difficult or hazardous.

## 9.0 Communications

- 9.1 The Associate Vice-President, External Affairs (or delegate) is responsible for the coordination of communications concerning closure of the University. The Associate Vice-President, External Affairs (or designate) will act as the official University spokesperson with media concerning the closure. Communications will, as appropriate, include: the time period covered; when further announcements will be made; and how the decision will effect day, evening and extension classes, examinations and University services.

In recognition that not all students, faculty and staff have access to all communication methods, a variety of methods will be used.

### 9.2 Media Public Service Announcements

The University's closure/cancellation notice are normally carried by the major media outlets. They pick up the information from the University website or through social media.

Media outlets may not provide the most up to date or detailed announcements.

### 9.3 Closure/Cancellation Hotlines

For the most up to date and detailed information, the SMU Closure/Cancellation Hotline should be called:

<b>Students</b>	<b>902-491-6263</b>
<b>Faculty and Staff</b>	<b>902-491-6264</b>

### 9.4 The SMU Web Page

A closure notice will be posted as soon as possible on the front page of the University web site: [www.smu.ca](http://www.smu.ca).

### 9.5 Social Media

Closure notices and updates will also be posted to the University's official Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/smuhalifax>) and Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/smuhalifax>).

- 9.6 In addition to the methods outlined above, individual departments may choose to arrange to contact staff through the use of phone trees, voice mail or email to provide more detailed information.

## **10.0 Essential Services**

- 10.1 The University may need to keep certain facilities open when the University is closed. Some departments and services may have to continue total or partial operations depending on the circumstances. It can be anticipated that some or all of the employees in such departments may be asked to remain at work or come in to work to provide emergency services.
- 10.2 Staff to provide essential services will be designated by the Department Head responsible for those services.
- 10.3 Occupations designated as essential for the purposes of this policy are:
  - (a) University Security
  - (b) Facilities Management
    - Boiler operators
    - Maintenance staff
    - Custodial staff
  - (c) Housing & Conference Services (Residences)
  - (d) Food Services (Residence)
  - (e) Designated Animal Care staff
  - (f) Designated ITSS staff
  - (g) Designated Public Affairs staff
- 10.4 The University expects workers to prioritize their own personal safety; therefore, an essential worker may decide that it is unsafe to travel to work. In such circumstances, the employee shall report to their supervisor as soon as possible. Essential workers who decide that it is safe to travel shall take every precaution necessary to ensure their personal safety when traveling to and from work.
- 10.5 During closure, the University's Emergency Response Team, chaired by the Vice-President, Finance & Administration or designate, will coordinate the provision of food and housing for essential workers who are required to stay on campus, as possible.

## **11.0 Employee Compensation**

- 11.1 When the University or part of the University is closed under this policy, regular full-time, regular part-time, and sessional employees whose work sites are affected and who were scheduled for work and who would have been at work but for the closure will be maintained at 100% of regular earnings for the period of closure. These closures shall not be considered University holidays.
- 11.2 Employees who were not intending to be at work and who had scheduled vacation, sick leave, compensating time off for overtime, days off in lieu, normal days off or other approved leave will have their time recorded as scheduled before the closure was announced.

- 11.3 Employees who are required to remain on duty or who are asked to report for their regularly scheduled hours of work to provide essential services will be paid for the time worked at a rate of time and one-half (1.5) plus the regular day's pay. Where these workers are unable to report to work in accordance with Section 10.4, they will be maintained at 100% of regular earnings for the period of closure.
- 11.4 Where the University is open and an employee is unable to report for work, is late, or makes a request to leave early as a result of weather conditions affecting the individual employee, the employee may use accumulated time owing or vacation credits, or may, with departmental approval, make up the hours at a mutually acceptable time.
- 11.5 Hourly paid employees will be paid for time worked during the closure.

## **12.0 Special Events**

- 12.1 Where campus facilities are rented for functions on the date of closure, the University department responsible for the rental will notify the event organizer. The renter is responsible for communicating the cancellation to participants.

## **13.0 Assistance for Stranded Individuals**

- 13.1 Any students, staff, faculty, visitors and guests stranded on the campus during a closure should contact University Security.

## **14.0 Limitations**

- 14.1 This policy is not intended to cover all eventualities. It is assumed that the decision making and relevant communications will be adapted, as appropriate, to suit the circumstances. Reasonable efforts will be made to communicate class cancellation or closure, but it is possible that not all individuals will receive notification despite these efforts.

## **15.0 Return to Normal Operations**

- 15.1 After the situation has stabilized and the University has secured the safety of people and property, the University will return to normal operations as soon as possible.
- 15.2 When it is safe to do so, some University operations may re-open or provide limited operations, prior to the rest of campus (e.g. Homburg Centre for Health & Wellness, Library).

## **16.0 Preparedness**

- 16.1 When circumstances warrant, a notice of closure, class cancellation or other change in operating status of the University will be issued on the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines in advance of conditions expected to have a significant impact on the University's normal operations.

## **17.0 Special Assistance**

- 17.1 The University recognises that staff with disabilities may require assistance during a closure. Employees have a responsibility for requesting accommodation including

identifying, where possible, the types of accommodation they consider appropriate. Such employees are encouraged to contact their Department Head to discuss any disability-related needs, and to arrange for reasonable and appropriate accommodation.

- 17.2 Department Heads also have a responsibility to initiate the process where they are aware that an employee, who is a member of an identified group, has a need for accommodation due to a characteristic and is prevented because of the characteristic from requesting the accommodation. In this case, the Department Head shall obtain the consent of the employee to proceed.
- 17.3 All requests for such accommodation shall be documented by the Department Head and copied to Human Resources. The University has the right to require documentation supporting the request or need for accommodation, including but not limited to a report from a qualified medical practitioner. The employee shall cooperate with any requirements of the University.

## **18.0 Ongoing Review**

- 18.1 At a minimum, this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

## **19.0 Annual Policy Circulation**

- 19.1 The Vice-President, Finance & Administration is responsible for ensuring that the policy for Unscheduled Closure and/or Cancellation of Classes of the University is disseminated to the University community on an annual basis.

## **PROCEDURES**

## **20.0 Source of Information**

- 20.1 The Senior Director, Facilities Management is responsible to gather all relevant information, monitor the situation on an ongoing basis, and report to the Vice-President, Finance & Administration in a timely fashion.
- 20.2 While every effort will be made to conduct thorough consultations before a closing decision is made, consultations may be limited in the interest of a speedy and efficient closing decision.
- 20.3 The University relies on the advice and warnings of:
  - HRM Police/RCMP
  - Halifax Transit
  - Provincial/HRM transportation representatives
  - Environment Canada
  - Emergency Measures Organizations (EMO)
  - Nova Scotia Power / Emera.
  - The closure of other universities and colleges will also be taken into consideration.

## **21.0 Weather Warnings**

- 21.1 For the safety of people and property, Environment Canada issues severe weather watches, warnings and special weather statements to the public. A Special Weather Statement means actual or expected weather conditions that may cause general inconvenience or concern, but do not pose a serious enough threat to warrant a weather warning. A weather watch alerts the public that conditions are favourable for the development of severe weather, while a weather warning indicates that severe weather is occurring or that hazardous weather is highly probable.
- 21.2 When Environment Canada issues a weather warning, members of the University's Closure & Cancellation Committee, which consists of the Vice-President, Finance & Administration (Chair); Vice-President, Academic & Research; Associate Vice-President, Enrolment Management & Registrar; Senior Director, Facilities Management; Senior Director, Student Services; Manager, University Security; and Communications Officer, will discuss the potential impacts on the University's operation. No changes will be made to the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines and SMU web page unless a decision to change the operating status of the University is made. The status quo is that the University remains open, and only changes in this status will be communicated.

Not all environment Canada weather warnings require monitoring for their impact on the University's normal operation (i.e. Frost Warning). However, the following Environment Canada weather warnings shall initiate a discussion among members of the Closure & Cancellation Committee:

- Winter Storm Watch
- Blizzard Warning
- Blowing Snow Warning
- Snowfall Warning
- Heavy Snowfall Warning
- Winter Storm Warning
- Hurricane Warning
- Tropical Storm Warning
- Freezing Rain Warning
- Freezing Drizzle Warning
- Tornado Warning
- Others as deemed necessary by the University.

The Criteria for Environment Canada weather warnings may be found on the

Public Alerting Criteria page of the Environment Canada website.

(<http://ec.gc.ca/meteo-weather/default.asp?lang=En&n=D9553AB5-1>)

Appendix A outlines sample messages to be used on the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines depending on the circumstances.

## **22.0 Decision to Close/Partially Close and/or Cancel Classes**

- 22.1 In accordance with Section 3, the decision to close the University or cancel classes is the responsibility of the President (or designate) after consultation with the Vice-President, Finance & Administration and consideration of all relevant information available. Every effort will be made to time this decision in accordance with Section

7 of this Policy. The Vice-President, Academic & Research will be consulted when deciding on the cancellation of classes.

- 22.2 In the event of a partial closure of the campus, (e.g. extended power failure), the decision may include the temporary relocation of affected staff or students to other campus locations.
- 22.3 In addition to Section 22.1, the cancellation of classes at Extension Centres may be required by the closure of the extension centre facility by its owners. The Program Manager, EMBA and Program Director, EPD are responsible for ensuring that such decisions are monitored.

### **23.0 Communicate Decision to Staff, Faculty and Students**

- 23.1 Once a decision is made, the Associate Vice-President, External Affairs is responsible for the coordination of communications concerning closure of the University. The Associate Vice-President, External Affairs (or designate) will act as the official University spokesperson with media concerning the closure.
- 23.2 The Associate Vice-President, External Affairs (or designate) will undertake the following communications in a timely manner and consistent with the provisions of this policy:
  - (a) The appropriate message will be recorded on the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines.
  - (b) Ensure the closure message is posted on the University web page and social media channels.
  - (c) Depending on the circumstances, additional external agencies may be contacted.
- 23.3 The Senior Director, Facilities Management is responsible to communicate the closure message to University Security, the Operations Manager for Athletics & Recreation, and the Residence Information Desk. Each of these information centres is responsible for ensuring that the official closure message is provided to callers.
- 23.4 The Associate Vice-President , External Affairs (or designate) is responsible for ensuring that the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines, web page and social media closure messages are updated as required, and that updated closure messages are communicated as required in accordance with Section 23.2. At a minimum, these updates shall take place in accordance with the schedule set out in Section 7.2 of this Policy.
- 23.5 The Senior Director, Facilities Management is responsible to communicate the closure message to the Business Development Manager of Conference Services who is responsible for communicating the closure decision to external organizations renting our facilities.
- 23.6 The Operations Manager for Athletics & Recreation is responsible for communicating the closure decision to external organizations renting the athletic facilities.
- 23.7 The Manager, University Security will ensure that notices are posted concerning the closure at all main entrances to University buildings and ensure that these signs are removed at appropriate times. The notices will advise people to call the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines for updates.

- 23.8 In the case where the University makes the decision to cancel classes or close while classes are in session, the following actions will be taken in addition to the previously outlined procedures:
- (a) The Associate Vice-President, External Affairs (or delegate) shall be responsible for ensuring that a broadcast voice mail is issued to employees.
  - (b) Senior Management Group members are responsible for communicating the closure message to their Department Managers/Heads. Departmental Managers/Heads are responsible for ensuring the message has been disseminated, particularly to those staff that do not have access to voice mail.
  - (c) The Manager, University Security is responsible to ensure that official notices are posted at all classroom doors. The notices will advise people to call the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines.
- 23.9 Where Extension classes are cancelled under Section 22.3, but the SMU campus remains open, the Program Manager, EMBA and Program Director, EPD will be responsible for coordinating communication to the affected students.
- (a) Notice of class cancellations at Extension Centres will be provided through class emails or department phone message.
  - (b) It is the responsibility of each instructor to advise their classes of the notification procedure to be used for cancellation of classes on the first night of classes.
- 23.10 In circumstances where the University has not cancelled classes but it may be impossible for a professor to conduct a scheduled class; the faculty member should make every reasonable effort to inform students of the class cancellation. It is strongly recommended that each faculty member make reference to their notification procedure (e.g., Course Tools, email, voice mail, etc.) in the course syllabus.

#### **24.0 Closure/Class Cancellations of Short Duration**

From time to time, it may be necessary for the University to close buildings and cancel classes for short periods due to an emergency situation such as a temporary power outage. Given the short timeline, the following modified procedures will be followed:

- (a) The Manager, University Security or the Senior Director, Facilities Management (alternate) will contact the Associate Registrar, Systems and Records to advise regarding the power outage.
- (b) The Associate Registrar, Systems and Records or Associate Vice-President Enrolment Management & Registrar (alternate) will provide direction on classes to be cancelled and provide the message to be conveyed to the University community. The Associate Registrar, Systems and Records is responsible to ensure that the Vice - President, Academic & Research is kept apprised of the situation. The Senior Director, Facilities Management is responsible to ensure that the Vice-President, Finance & Administration is kept apprised of the situation.
- (c) The Senior Director, Facilities Management is responsible to advise the Designated Communications Officer, who in turn, is responsible for ensuring

that the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines are updated as required. Updates will normally be made ten minutes prior to the start of scheduled classes.

(d) The Manager, University Security will be responsible for ensuring that notices are posted at each building entrance. The notices will advise people to call the Closure/Cancellation Hotlines for updates.

(e) The Manager, University Security is responsible to advise the Program Manager, EMBA and Program Director, EPD or designate of the situation.

**25.0** In the event of a partial closure (e.g. 1 or 2 buildings only), the appropriate communication method will be chosen on a case-by-case basis.

25.1 Communications will, as appropriate, include: the time period covered; when further announcements will be made; and how the decision will effect day, evening and extension classes, examinations and University services.

## **26.0 Return to Normal Operations**

26.1 After consideration of all relevant information (Sections 8 and 20), the President (or designate) will make all decisions concerning the return to normal operations. Under most circumstances, this will result in the reopening of the University. However, in some cases, a phased in approach by employee group or by building, may be required to ease the transition.

26.2 Information regarding the reopening of the campus will be communicated using the procedures outlined in Section 23 of this policy.

26.3 When the weather cancellations or change in the University's operation has ended, the Associate Vice-President, External Affairs (or designate), will ensure that the University website and Closure/Cancellation Hotlines are updated to reflect normal operations.

## **Appendix A – Closure Line Messages**

Messages should be as brief as possible to minimize bottlenecks in the phone system.

Although it is difficult to predict the exact situation that may arise, the following messages illustrate the sequence of announcements that could be used in a weather-related University closing situation:

### **Sample Message 1 – No Closure/Cancellation**

There are no closures or cancellations to report at this time. Thank you for calling the Saint Mary's University closure information hotline.

### **Sample Message 2 – Classes are cancelled / University is open**

The University is open; however, classes and examinations on campus and extension centres are cancelled for (day/month/year). All employees are requested to report to work. This message will be updated by (time), if the situation changes.

Students are advised to monitor the Saint Mary's closure information hotline for updates. We remind members of the SMU community and visitors to the University to exercise proper caution when traveling in winter conditions. Thank you for calling the Saint Mary's University closure information hotline.

### **Sample Message 3 - University Has Delayed Opening**

As of (time on date) the University has delayed opening until (insert time) due to weather conditions. This message will be updated by (time) if the situation changes. Thank you for calling the Saint Mary's University closure information hotline.

### **Sample Message 4 - University is Closed**

As of (time on date) the University is closed due to weather conditions. Thank you for calling the Saint Mary's University closure information hotline.

### **Sample Message 5 – University is open/ outage building closure**

The University is open. However, all classes held in the (bldg. name) building have been cancelled until (date/time) due to a temporary power outage. All updates will be posted to this hotline. Thank you for calling the Saint Mary's University closure information hotline.