



Name:	Policy on Unscheduled Closure and/or Cancellation of Classes
Policy Number:	5-1002
Approving Authority:	Vice-President, Finance & Administration
Approved:	August 10, 2004
Responsible Office:	Office of the Vice-President, Finance & Administration
Responsibility:	Vice-President, Finance & Administration
Revision Date(s)	November 5, 2021 , February 19, 2021, November 5, 2019, December 7, 2017, September 12, 2016, December 12, 2014, December 12, 2008, February 28, 2007, December 19, 2005
Supersedes:	Not applicable
Next Required Review:	Annually; April

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:
 - (a) establish guidelines for the decision-making process that may lead to closure or cancellation;
 - (b) establish protocols for communicating a closure decision once made; and
 - (c) 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, this Policy will maintain a degree of flexibility in order to handle the essential nature of emergency situations, which are unique and may arise unexpectedly.

2. Jurisdiction/Scope

- 2.1 This Policy is applicable University-wide.

3. Policy

- 3.1 Authority The decision to close/partially close the University or cancel classes is the responsibility of the President (or designate) after consultation with the Vice-President, Finance & Administration and/or the Vice-President, Academic & Research, and consideration of all relevant information available as per Section 3.5. As well, the University will close when the President determines that closure is appropriate in the circumstances. The President may receive advice from the Campus Closure & Cancellation Committee. The President may issue any directives considered necessary to protect the University and the safety of University members, including without limitation the temporary or permanent relocation of affected faculty, staff and students within the University campus.

- 3.2 Closure 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 or from the University.
- 3.3 Partial Closures
- (a) Partial closures of the campus (i.e. selected buildings) may take place from time to time and may result in faculty, staff or students being moved to other facilities on campus.
 - (b) 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.
- 3.4 Cancellation of Classes or Examinations
- (a) In some circumstances, where it is deemed safe to remain open, it may be decided to cancel some or all classes.
 - (b) Where classes have been cancelled but the University remains open, all employees who are regularly expected to perform their responsibilities on campus will make reasonable efforts to fulfil their responsibilities on campus.
 - (c) Cancelled classes will be addressed in accordance with the [Senate Policy on the Academic Implications of Disruptions of University Business](#) (Policy 8-1008).
 - (d) Cancelled formal examinations will be rescheduled in accordance with the [Senate Policy on Final Examinations \(Policy 8-1016\)](#).
- 3.5 Determining Factors
- (a) The safety of our faculty, staff and students, is of paramount importance.
 - (b) Factors contributing to the decision to close/partially close the University or cancel classes include, without limitation:
 - State of emergency or impending state of emergency;
 - Weather conditions (current and forecasted);
 - Road conditions;
 - Availability of public transport
 - Ability to access and use the campus safely;
 - Ability to maintain campus roadways, parking lots, paths, stairs and building entrances in safe condition;
 - Ability of emergency services to access the campus;
 - Disadvantages of sending individuals back into the weather once they have arrived on campus; and
 - 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.
- 3.6 Preparedness When circumstances warrant, a notice of closure, partial closure, class cancellation or other change in operating status of the University will be implemented and shared via the communications media noted in Section 3.7 in advance of the conditions expected to have a significant impact on normal operations.

3.7 Communications

- (a) Responsibility The Communications Manager and/or Manager of Digital Experience are responsible for the coordination of communications concerning closure of the University. The Communications Manager and/or Manager of Digital Experience are the official University spokesperson(s) with media concerning the closure. They will determine the appropriate modes of communications for the circumstances. Communications will, as appropriate, include the time period covered and how the decision will affect classes, any scheduled examinations and University services.
- (b) Media Public Service Announcements The University's closure/cancellation notices may be identified and broadcast by local media outlets. However, media outlets may not provide the most up to date or detailed announcements. The University website and official communications channels are the official source of closure information for faculty, staff and students.
- (c) University Web Page The smu.ca website home page and alerts page are the official source for the most up-to-date and detailed information on closures. Any change in open status will be posted to the homepage of <https://www.smu.ca/>.
- (d) Social Media Closure notices and updates will also be posted to the University's official social media pages.
- (e) Department notices Individual University departments have the discretion to institute other unofficial modes of communication with staff, including phone trees, voice mail, or email, to provide more detailed information.

3.8 Essential Services

- (a) The University may require certain facilities to remain 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.
- (b) Staff to provide essential services will be designated by the immediate supervisor responsible for those services.
- (c) Occupations designated as essential for the purposes of this Policy are:
 - University Security
 - Facilities Management
 - Boiler operators
 - Maintenance staff
 - Custodial staff
 - Housing & Conference Services (Residences)
 - Food Services (Residence)
 - Designated Animal Care staff
 - Designated EIT staff
 - Designated Public Affairs staff
- (d) The University expects employees 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 immediate 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.

- (e) 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.

3.9 Employee Compensation

- (a) When the University is closed or partially closed under this Policy, all employees affected by the closure or partial closure who were
- scheduled to work,
 - would have been working but for the closure, partial closure, or the event causing the closure or partial closure,
- will be maintained at 100% of regular earnings for the period of closure. A closure or partial closure under this Policy is not a University holiday.
- (b) Hourly paid employees will be paid for time worked during the closure.
- (c) Employees 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.
- (d) During unscheduled closures or cancellations, employees who were to be working from campus that day are not required to shift to hybrid work for the day. Employees who were to be working Hybrid Flex or Home Flex that day are to continue their workday unless other arrangements have been discussed with their manager (ex: taking a vacation day).
- (e) 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 3.8(d), they will receive regular earnings for the period of closure.
- (f) 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.

3.10 Special Events 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.

3.11 Stranded Individuals Any faculty, staff, students, visitors or guests stranded on the campus during a closure should contact University Security.

3.12 Limitations This Policy is not intended to cover all circumstances. It is assumed that 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.

3.13 Return to Normal Operations

- (a) 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, as determined by the President.
- (b) When it is safe to do so as determined by the President, some University operations may re-open or provide limited operations, prior to the rest of campus (e.g. Homburg Centre for Health & Wellness, Library).

3.14 Special Assistance

- (a) The University recognizes 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 immediate supervisor to discuss any disability-related needs, and to arrange for reasonable and appropriate accommodation.
- (b) Immediate supervisors 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 immediate supervisor shall obtain the consent of the employee to proceed.
- (c) All requests for such accommodation shall be documented by the immediate supervisor 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.

3.15 Annual Policy Circulations The Vice-President, Finance & Administration is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is disseminated to the University community on an annual basis.

4. Related Policies, Procedures & Documents

- 4.1 Procedures and roles and responsibilities with respect to implementation and application of this Policy are attached as Schedule A.
- 4.2 Guidelines relevant to application of this Policy are attached as Schedule B.

Policy on Unscheduled Closure and/or Cancellation of Classes

SCHEDULE A - PROCEDURES

- 1. Closure & Cancellation Committee** For the purposes of the Policy, there shall be a Closure & Cancellation Committee (the “Committee”), constituted as follows:
 - 1.1 The Closure & Cancellation Committee consists of the Vice-President, Finance & Administration (Co-Chair); Vice-President, Academic & Research (Co-Chair); Associate Vice-President, Academic & Enrolment Management; Senior Director, Facilities Management; Senior Director, Student Affairs & Services; Chief Information Officer, Enterprise Information Technology; University Registrar; Manager, University Security; Operations Manager, Facilities Management; Communications Manager; and Manager of Digital Experience.
 - 1.2 The role of the Committee is to discuss the potential impacts on the University’s operations of an event that may require application of the Policy and to advise the President.
 - 1.3 As stipulated in the Policy, the decision to close the University or cancel classes is the responsibility of the President. The Committee is advisory to the President.
 - 1.4 It is not necessary for the President to have received a recommendation from the Committee prior to deciding under the Policy.
- 2. Roles and Responsibilities**
 - 2.1 Senior Director, Facilities Management gathers all information relevant to a closure or cancellation under the Policy, monitors situations on an ongoing basis, and timely reports to the Vice-President, Finance & Administration and/or the Vice-President, Academic & Research. The Senior Director, Facilities Management will refer to the Guidelines for the purposes of information gathering. The Senior Director, Facilities Management will also:
 - (a) Communicate closure and cancellation notices to University Security; the Assistant Director, Athletics & Recreation; and the Residence Information Desk
 - (b) Communicate closure notices to the Manager, Conferences Services
 - (c) Communicate closure and cancellation notices to the Communications Manager and/or Manager of Digital Experience
 - (d) Communicate closure and cancellation notices to the University Librarian and to library@smu.ca
 - 2.2 Communications Manager and/or Manager of Digital Experience are responsible for the coordination of communications about closure of the University. These positions carry out the following duties:
 - (a) Acts as the official University spokesperson(s) concerning actions taken under the Policy
 - (b) In a timely manner and in accordance with the Policy:
 - Ensures that closure notices and updates are communicated as required, and are posted on the University web home page and alerts page and on social media channels
 - If necessary, notifies additional external agencies

- (c) Where the University decides to cancel classes or close while classes are in session, ensures that a broadcast voice mail is issued to employees.
 - (d) When closures, cancellations, or changes in University operations have ended, ensures that the home webpage and alerts pages of the University web page are updated to reflect normal operations.
- 2.3 Manager, University Security has the following responsibilities under the Policy:
- (a) Ensures that notices regarding a closure or cancellation are posted at all main entrances to University buildings and are removed at the appropriate time. Such notices will refer people to the University's web home and alerts pages for updates
 - (b) Where the University decides to cancel classes or close while classes are in session, ensures that official notices are posted at all classroom doors. Such notices will refer people to the University's web home and alerts pages for updates.
 - (c) Where the University decides to close, partially close, or cancel classes due to an unforeseen emergency that is expected to be of short duration (such as a power outage), contacts the Program Manager, EMBA and Program Director, EPD or designate to provide notice and information about the event.
 - (d) Ensures that the official closure message is provided to callers
- 2.4 University Registrar or Associate Vice-President, Academic & Enrolment Management (alternate) Where the University decides to close, partially close, or cancel classes due to an unforeseen emergency that is expected to be of short duration (such as a power outage), provides direction on classes requiring cancellation and provides a notice to be conveyed to the University community to the Communications Manager and/or Manager of Digital Experience; and apprises the Vice-President, Academic & Research of the situation.
- 2.5 Assistant Director, Athletics & Recreation
- (a) Communicates closure decisions to external organizations and individuals impacted by a closure of athletic and recreation facilities
 - (b) Ensures that the official closure message is provided to callers
- 2.6 Manager, Conference Services communicates closure and cancellation decisions to external organizations and individuals impacted by a closure of conference facilities.
- 2.7 Senior Management Group Members communicate closure and cancellation notices to their direct reports, who in turn are responsible for ensuring that notices are disseminated to all employees within their departments.
- 2.8 Residence Information Desk Ensures that the official closure message is provided to callers.
- 2.9 Faculty
- (a) Whether or not a notice of cancellation has been issued under the Policy, if a member of faculty cannot conduct a scheduled class, the faculty member should make every reasonable effort to communicate with affected students. Ideally, faculty members will refer to their notification procedures in their course syllabi.
 - (b) The faculty member will also inform their Department Chair/Program Coordinator of the class cancellation.

3. Return to Normal Operations

- 3.1 The President (or delegate) will make all decisions concerns a return to normal operations. Under most circumstances, this will result in a reopening of the University, but the President may direct a phased in approach by employee group or building, if deemed appropriate and consistent with the purpose of the Policy.
- 3.2 Information regarding a reopening will be communicated in accordance with these Procedures.

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SCHEDULE B – GUIDELINES

These Guidelines are general statements that:

- Are not mandatory and are a suggestion of best practice or useful resources;
- Aid when the use of judgement is required for the application of the Policy;
- Can change frequently and are not subject to the requirements of the Policy or the Procedures for this Policy.

A. Sources of information

- 1.** The University, and in particular those charged with application of the Policy may rely on the advice and warnings issued by the following external organizations:
 - 1.1 HRM Police/RCMP
 - 1.2 Halifax Transit
 - 1.3 Provincial or municipal departments of transportation
 - 1.4 Environment Canada weather warnings and special weather statements
 - 1.5 Emergency Measures Organizations
 - 1.6 Nova Scotia Power
- 2.** The closure of other universities and colleges affected by an event may also be taken into consideration.

B. Timing considerations

- 1.** Every effort should be made to communicate a decision under the Policy as early as possible, taking into consideration that some University employees work early morning, evening, or weekend/holiday shifts. Best efforts should be taken to ensure that decisions under the Policy are communicated by:

Daytime Operations: 6:00 a.m.

Evening Operations: 3:00 p.m.

In the event of closure/class cancellation of short notice: 10 minutes prior to the start of scheduled classes