



## UNSCHEDULED CLOSURE AND/OR CANCELLATION OF CLASSES POLICY

### Employees covered by this policy

This policy applies to all employees (including employed students) at the University.

### Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is:

- to establish guidelines for the decision-making process that may lead to closure or cancellation;
- to establish protocols for communicating a closure decision once made; and
- to outline procedures to be followed at such a time.

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.

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.

### Closure/Partial Closure

The University will close when there is a situation which makes it extremely difficult or dangerous for faculty, staff or students to inhabit University facilities remain at, or travel to the University. In addition to these requirements, the University will close when the President (or designate) determines that closure is appropriate in the circumstances.

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.

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.

### Cancellation of Classes

In some circumstances, where it is deemed safe to remain open, it may be decided to cancel some or all classes. 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.

Extension classes offered through Continuing Education are held at various off-campus locations. In some circumstances, classes at these locations may be cancelled due to the closure of those facilities, while the StFX campus remains unaffected. Alternatively, circumstances may allow classes to be held at off-campus locations, while the StFX campus is closed.

### Cancelled Examinations

Cancelled formal examinations may be rescheduled or alternative arrangements made by the Academic Vice President and Provost in consultation with the Deans, the Registrar and others as deemed necessary.

## Timing

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

- Daytime Operations 6:30 AM
- Evening operations 1:00 PM
- Night-time Operations 5:00 PM

## Determining Factors

The safety of our students, staff and faculty is of paramount importance.

Factors contributing to the decision to close/partially close the University or cancel classes include:

- State of emergency or impending state of emergency;
- Weather conditions (current and forecasted);
- Road conditions;
- 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.

## Communications

The Director of Communications is responsible for the coordination of communications concerning closure of the University. The Director of Communications (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, 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.

## Media Public Service Announcements

The University's closure/cancellation notice will be communicated to CJFX (XFM) Antigonish

## The StFX Web Page

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

## Campus Email and Voice Mail

The Communications Department will send a closure notice as soon as possible to all students, and all University employees through the campus email and voice mail systems.

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

## Essential Services

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.

Employees to provide essential services will be designated by the Director/Dept. Manager responsible for those services.

Occupations designated as essential for the purposes of this policy are:

- Campus Security
- Facilities Management
  - Boiler operators
  - Maintenance staff
  - Custodial staff
- Residence Services
- Food Services (Residence)
- Designated Animal Care staff
- Designated Public Affairs staff

The University expects employees to prioritize their own personal safety; therefore, an essential employee 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 employees who decide that it is safe to travel shall take every precaution necessary to ensure their personal safety when traveling to and from work.

During closure, the University's Emergency Response Team, chaired by the Vice President Finance and Operations (or designate), will coordinate the provision of food and housing for essential employees who are required to stay on campus, as possible.

### **Employee Compensation**

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.

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.

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 2 times (2x) the normal rate of pay. Where these workers are unable to report to work, they will be maintained at 100% of regular earnings for the period of closure.

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 days, or may with departmental approval, make up the hours at a mutually acceptable time. If an employee chooses to, is able to and has Supervisory/Managerial approval to work from home on such a day, he or she will be maintained at 100% of regular earnings for the period of closure.

Hourly paid employees will be paid for time worked during the closure.

### **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.

### **Assistance for Stranded Individuals**

Any students, staff, faculty, visitors and guests stranded on the campus during a closure should contact Security 867-3981.

### **Special Assistance**

The University recognizes that employees 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 Manager to discuss any disability-related needs, and to arrange for reasonable and appropriate accommodation.

Department Managers 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 Manager shall obtain the consent of the employee to proceed.

All requests for such accommodation shall be documented by the Department Manager 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.

### **Limitations**

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.

### **Return to Normal Operations**

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.

When it is safe to do so, some University operations may re-open or provide limited operations, prior to the rest of campus.

### **Preparedness**

When there is appropriate lead time and circumstances warrant, an advisory will be issued on CJFX (XFM) and on the StFX web page regarding a weather watch (or other emergency situation) that is being monitored for impact on the University's normal operations.

### **Ongoing Review**

After each time the policy and related procedures are used, they will be reviewed in an effort to improve their effectiveness.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Sources of Information**

The Vice President, Finance and Operations (or designate) is responsible to gather all relevant information, monitor the situation on an ongoing basis and report to the President (or designate) in a timely fashion.

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.

The University relies on the advice and warnings of:

- Local RCMP
- Provincial transportation representatives
- Environment Canada
- Emergency Measures Organizations (EMO)
- Nova Scotia Power
- Facilities Management

The Criteria for Environment Canada weather warnings may be found on the [Environment Canada Website - http://www.atl.ec.gc.ca/weather/terminology.html](http://www.atl.ec.gc.ca/weather/terminology.html)

### **Decisions to Close/Partially Close and/or Cancel Classes**

In accordance with this policy, the decision to close the University or cancel classes is the responsibility of the President (or designate) after consultation with the Vice President of Finance and Operations ( or designate) and with consideration of all relevant information available. Every effort will be made to time this decision in accordance with applicable sections of this Policy. The Academic Vice President and Provost will be consulted when deciding on the cancellation of classes. The President (or designate) will immediately advise all Vice Presidents of the decision, who will be responsible for ensuring that other management positions are advised.

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.

In addition, the cancellation of classes at off-campus locations may be required by the closure of the facility by its owners. The Director of Continuing Education is responsible for ensuring that such decisions are monitored.

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

Once a decision is made, the Director of Communications ( or designate) is responsible for the coordination of communications concerning closure of the University. The Director of Communications (or designate) will act as the official University spokesperson with media concerning the closure.

The Director of Communications (or designate) will undertake the following communications in a timely manner and consistent with the provisions of this policy:

- The local radio station will be notified.
- To ensure a consistent message across the campus, Director of Communications ( or designate) will communicate the closure message to the Security office 867- 3981 and the Main Information Desk/Switchboard 867-3300 as well as the Residence Manager 867-5038 by phone and email. Desk attendants will record the message on the Information Desk's voice mail. Each of these information centres is responsible for ensuring that the official closure message is provided to callers.
- Ensure the closure message is posted on the University web page.
- Notice will be communicated to the StFX's Students Union.
- Depending on the circumstances, additional external agencies may be contacted.

The Director of Communications (or designate) is responsible for ensuring that the web page, switchboard, residence manager and other media closure messages are up-dated as required.

The Director of Communications (or designate) is responsible for notifying the Director of Conference Services. The Director of Conference Services will be responsible for communicating the closure decision to external organizations renting our facilities.

The Director of Athletics is responsible for notifying the Facilities and Programming staff for Athletics and Recreation events. The Director of Athletics will be responsible for communicating the closure decision to external organizations renting our athletic facilities and with other universities where varsity scheduled activities are impacted.

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:

- The Director of Human Resources shall be responsible for ensuring that a broadcast email is issued to employees.
- Vice Presidents are responsible for communicating the closure message to their Department Managers. Departmental Managers are responsible for ensuring the message has been disseminated, particularly to those staff that does not have access to email.

Where Extension classes are cancelled but the StFX campus remains open, the Director of Continuing Education will be responsible for coordinating communication to the affected students.

- Notice of class cancellations of Extension Classes will be on CJFX (XFM)
- It is the responsibility of each instructor to advise the class of the notification procedure to be used for cancellation of classes listen to CJFX (XFM) on the first night of classes.

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 (email, voice mail, etc).

### **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:

- The Director of Facilities Management (or designate) will contact the Registrar to advise regarding the power outage.
- The Registrar or Associate Registrar in consultation with the Academic Deans will provide direction on classes to be cancelled and provide the message to be conveyed to the University community. The Registrar is responsible to ensure that the Academic Vice President is kept apprised of the situation. The Director of Facilities Management is responsible to ensure that the Vice President, Finance and Operations is kept apprised of the situation
- The Director of Communications or designate is responsible to keep the University community apprised of the situation and of any updates.

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

### **Return to Normal Operations**

After consideration of all relevant information, 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.

Information regarding the reopening of the campus will be communicated using the procedures outlined in earlier sections of this policy.