512 Inclement Weather / Emergency Closing Procedures

Updated: March 18, 2026

Authority to Close the University

The authority and responsibility for closing, in whole or in part, the University due to a condition or situation where, upon assessment or review, such closure is warranted, rests with the Vice President (Finance and Operations) or designate. In the event the Vice President (Finance and Operations) or designate cannot be reached, the responsibility for closing the University shall rest with the next reachable officer in the following sequence:

- Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
- Associate Vice-President (Academic)
- Vice-Provost (Student Affairs)
- Director, or Designate Campus Safety Office (CSO)

Although these procedures have been developed primarily for closings as a result of inclement weather conditions, these procedures will also be followed in the event of any other conditions or situations that require the closing or evacuation of the University.

While every effort will be made to conduct thorough consultations before a closing decision is made, some consultations included in this policy may not occur in the interest of expedited and efficient decision making for public safety.

When meteorological information indicates the potential for inclement weather, the Director, Campus Safety Office will contact the Registrar and the Vice-Provost (Student Affairs) to both inform them of the impending weather and to determine if there are any key campus activities that could be affected should a closure occur. This information will be provided by the Director, Campus Safety Office to the Vice-President (Finance and Operations) during the decision-making consultative process.

Whenever possible, if a decision is to be made to close[1] every effort will be made to render a judgment on the matter by 5 a.m. to allow for public communication. If a decision cannot be made at 5 a.m. weather conditions will continue to be monitored every hour and the decision to close may be made at 6 a.m., 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. In the event a decision to close is made after 5 a.m., all efforts will be made by leaders to ensure that individuals on campus can either leave safely, if they are on campus, or they will have access to appropriate facilities. Doors will not be locked, nor will individuals be asked to leave, unless they can leave safely. If the University must close during normal business hours, every effort will be made to communicate the decision to provide a minimum one-hour lead time to ensure the orderly curtailment of operations.

The chart below provides additional details on the timing of activities impacting the decision to close the University.

Description of Activity	Time
Closure to be Considered - Situational Assessment/ Stakeholder Consultation	Up to 4:15 a.m.
Closure Recommended - Stakeholder Consultation with Authorized Delegate	4:15 a.m. – 5 a.m.
Decision Made to Close	5 a.m.
Communicate Decision for Closure	5:30 a.m.

Following the 5 a.m. decision point if the decision to close cannot be made, weather conditions will continue to be monitored each hour and the decision to close may be made at 6 a.m., 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. to close the campus if conditions make the campus unsafe to access.

With the exception of those essential or required services listed in Appendix A, the closing will be final and not left to the discretion of individuals or departments unless special arrangements are made with the Vice President (Finance & Operations) or designate and the University of Guelph Campus Safety Office. Only those employees who have been informed in advance by their supervisors that they provide essential or required services for the purposes of this policy are expected to report to the workplace.

To the extent feasible, staff members who have not been designated as either essential or required to be on campus are asked to operate under a remote work/work from home arrangement to perform their normal work responsibilities during the period of closure for inclement weather.

Each Vice-President will be responsible for ensuring the preparation of communication procedures (e.g. telephone contact trees, mass email distribution lists, group text messaging, etc.) that can be utilized in emergency closing situations to communicate department-specific decisions concerning the closure or curtailment of normal University operations. Notification to the University community and general external community (e.g. media) will be managed by Communications & Marketing and the Campus Safety Office (for U of G Alert messages). The development of communication procedures should incorporate, as appropriate, the need to contact non-University operations located on campus (e.g. external retail and professional service providers located in the University Centre), student and employee organizations with their own staff, and volunteers (e.g. Campus Safe Walk, First Response Team). Each Vice-President will be responsible for ensuring these communication procedures are current and activated appropriately when this policy is implemented.

In all cases where this policy identifies a particular University administrator, this will apply to the administrator or designate at the time the policy is being implemented.

Section A - Steps Leading to a Decision Concerning Closure of Guelph Campus

1. The on-duty Campus Safety Office Sergeant or Special Constable will monitor:

- Road, parking lot and sidewalk conditions in consultation with the Grounds Manager or designate
- The weather forecast through the University website weather link
- City schools and post-secondary institutions, other organization closures, radio broadcast road conditions and closures with a focus on Highway 6, 7, and 401 through the MTO website www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/traveller/conditions/southwestern.html [1]
- Guelph Transit operational status as communicated to the Campus Safety Office Dispatch.
- Environment Canada website https://weather.gc.ca/forecast/hourly/on-5_metric_e.html

If the above information indicates that conditions are such that closure should be considered, the Sergeant or Special Constable will contact the Director, Campus Safety Office or designate by 4:15 a.m. with advice regarding the curtailment of University operations due to inclement weather conditions or other emergency conditions.

2. The Director, Campus Safety Office or designate will then contact the AVP, Physical Resources or designate with a preliminary assessment of inclement weather conditions. The Director, Campus Safety Office or designate and AVP, Physical Resources or designate will consult with relevant contacts to the extent possible given the time of day and particular circumstances to gather additional information for assessment purposes, including:

(a) weather and road conditions from sources including:

- Canadian Automobile Association (CAA)
- Environment Canada/ Weather Network
- Guelph City Police
- Ministry of Transportation/ 511on.ca
- Ontario Provincial Police

- Guelph Transit Commission
- Metrolinx

(b) operational status, (e.g. open or closed), of school boards within the City of Guelph including:

- Upper Grand District School Board
- Wellington Catholic District School Board; and

(c) operational status, (e.g. open or closed), of other post-secondary educational institutions within the vicinity of the University including:

- Conestoga College (Guelph Campus)
- University of Waterloo
- Wilfrid Laurier University
- McMaster University

Following consultation with relevant contacts and staff on site, the AVP, Physical Resources or designate and Director, Campus Safety Office or designate will jointly determine if a closure is recommended. The Director, Campus Safety Office will contact and advise the Vice-President (Finance and Operations) or designate of the recommendation by 5 a.m. The Vice-President (Finance and Operations) or designate will decide to remain open or to close the University and advise the University Executive Team of the decision.

3. If the Vice-President (Finance and Operations) or designate decides to close the University, the decision will include, when possible, an indication of when the University expects to reopen.

In the case of a decision to close the University it is also the Vice-President (Finance and Operations) or designate's decision, based on input and/or consultation with the appropriate Vice- President, whether select University operations may be permitted to remain open under special arrangements. This decision shall be communicated to affected operations and to the Campus Safety Office by the appropriate Vice-President.

The AVP Communication & Marketing or designate will initiate communications to the University and external communities concerning closure of the University and will serve as the official University spokesperson with media concerning the closure. The AVP, Physical Resources or designate, will advise the Director, Campus Safety Office or designate, and they will proceed to work together on operational matters throughout the closure of the University.

Each Vice-President will proceed to advise their operations of the closure decision and the specific effects on those operations using their communication procedures.

4. Once a decision is made to close the University, the AVP Communication & Marketing or designate is responsible for pursuing the following in a timely manner as best as can be done in the circumstances, and consistent with the provisions of this policy:

1) Post the closure message the University Campus Status page Campus Status | University of Guelph [1]
2) Send notification through U of G Alert (process managed by the Campus Safety Office), which will automatically drive to the Campus Status page. Communications and Marketing will edit the alert notice on the homepage to link to the article on the Campus Status page
3) Communicate the closure through social media and link to the article posted on the campus status pages page (allows for a single-source of correct and up-to-date information)
4) Ensure that the main University telephone switchboard greeting is changed
5) Contact local radio and television stations

The homepage alert, social media, switchboard message, digital signs and other communication vehicles will advise students, faculty and staff to monitor the Campus Status page and social media for updates.

The AVP Communication & Marketing will ensure that the home page, social media, switchboard, and other closure messages are updated as required. The AVP Communication & Marketing or designate will also be responsible for checking the Campus Events calendar to determine what in-person events are planned that may be affected and communicating the closing decision where possible.

5. Steps Taken, if possible, In Advance of Inclement Weather

When there is appropriate lead time and circumstances warrant, consideration will be given to issuing an advisory on the University News page, a post on the University homepage, and sharing on social media a "weather watch" (or other emergency situation) that is being monitored for impact on the University's normal operations. The Vice-President (Finance and Operations) will work with the AVP Communication and Marketing or designate to prepare and issue an appropriate message in these circumstances.

When a weather watch or other emergency conditions develop during regular business hours, the AVP Communication and Marketing or designate will endeavor to inform organizers of any in-person events listed on the Campus Events calendar and Gryph Life Calendar if a decision to close the University appears likely. As time permits, the AVP Communication & Marketing or designate will consult organizers about any communication considerations that should be addressed for a postponed or cancelled event.

Section B - Closure of U of G Operations Outside of Guelph

Since weather conditions may vary across the province, the Vice-President (Finance & Operations) normally delegates responsibility to the Dean, Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), and the Vice-President (Research) respectively for ensuring that the regional campuses of OAC at Ridgetown (including affiliated research Stations at Cedar Springs and Huron) and the Research Stations outside Guelph have similar emergency closing procedures in place.

For Research Stations managed from Guelph (Woodstock, Arkell, Ponsonby, Elora, Alma, Simcoe, Bradford, Winchester, New Liskeard and Emo), the Director, Research Facilities Management in consultation with the local unit managers, will advise the Vice-President (Research) regarding inclement weather conditions, including roads being closed by the OPP or other authority, or other emergency conditions that affect the operation of the Research Stations. Measures being taken to care for the livestock, as well as for the provision of other essential services at the Research Stations, will be reported to the Vice-President (Research). The Director will relay any instructions from the Vice-President (Research) to the appropriate Unit Managers.

Similarly, the Vice-President (Finance & Operations) normally delegates to the Vice-Provost for the University of Guelph-Humber (U of G-H) responsibility to ensure that the U of G-H have similar emergency closing procedures in place.

In all cases, the Dean (OAC)/Vice-President (Research)/ Vice-Provost for the University of Guelph-Humber (U of G-H) will inform the Vice-President (Finance & Operations) whether a closing decision has been made in some or all these areas. If a decision has been made to close, the Dean (OAC)/Vice-President (Research)/ Vice- Provost for the University of Guelph-Humber (U of G-H) will also inform the AVP Communication & Marketing or designate s of the decision and determine whether any related communications are needed.

Section C – Reopening of the University following closure

To address questions from the community, an update will be made to the Campus Status page indicating the University’s reopening date and time.

A U of G Alert will **not** be sent to notify the community that the University has reopened.

In the event of a closure Management will assess conditions throughout the morning in the event Athletic facilities can be reopened prior to the full University reopening. See Appendix B for the reopening of Athletics facilities and programs during an inclement weather closure.

Appendix A - Essential or Required Services

Essential or required services normally remain operational during the closure of the University. For clarity, in the event it becomes necessary to curtail or suspend a required service, the dean or vice-president who oversees the required service will be contacted directly.

The following departments/units have been identified as providing either essential or required services:

- Laboratory Services Division
- Off-Campus Research Stations
- Physical Resources
- Student Health Services
- Student Housing Services
- Hospitality Services
- Computing & Communication Services
- Ontario Veterinary College/ Health Sciences Centre
- Campus Safety Office
- Animal care facilities, including Central Animal Facility and others on the Guelph campus, plus animal care at field stations
- Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Centre
- Controlled Environment Plant Growth Facilities

The AVPs or Directors of the above essential or required services are responsible for: identifying the levels of service and staffing required to continue operations during a closure; and for ensuring continuing operations during a closure.

Employees designated to provide these essential or required services should be informed by their supervisors. Not every employee in a unit will normally be designated as providing essential or required services. When time permits, a reminder should be provided to these employees when a weather watch is in effect. Only those employees designated by their supervisors as providing these essential or required services for the purposes of this policy are expected to report to work in case of a closure of the University.

Appendix B - Early Re-opening Procedure - Athletics Facilities and Programs

In the event of an inclement weather closure Management will continuously monitor weather and the campus conditions to determine if conditions will allow for the safe reopening of Athletic facilities prior to the campus wide reopening. Due to the high utilization rate of Athletic facilities and programing in the evening by students on campus, students in the city, our community and potentially families from well outside our municipalities coming to campus for competitive sport leagues the timely decision to re-open Athletic facilities and allow programming is imperative.

The following procedure will be enacted in the event the University is closed due to inclement weather:

1. The Athletics Department Operations team will meet at 9a.m. to assess the scheduled evening activities (4 p.m. on). If the weather is **not** forecasted to improve throughout the day, and there is no possibility of a safe evening reopening, no further action is required.

2. If there is a possibility of an evening reopening of Athletic Facilities communication will be sent by Athletics leadership to part-time staff and permit holders, and a posting will be added to our website and social media that the University is closed and a 4 p.m. re-opening for Athletics facilities and programs is being assessed.

3. By 12 p.m. on the Campus Safety Office in consultation with both Physical Resources and Athletics Leadership will assess if we can safely re-open Athletic facilities at 4 p.m.

a. If no, all facilities and programming remain closed, and all shifts are cancelled off of i-work. Existing communication will be updated.

b. If yes, the Director, Campus Safety Office will contact and advise the Vice-President (Finance and Operations) or designate by 12 p.m. The Vice-President (Finance and Operations) or designate will make the decision to re-open Athletics by 12:15 p.m.

4. If the Vice-President (Finance and Operations) or designate makes the decision to re-open Athletic facilities the Director of Athletics will send an approved Athletics Staff communication informing the department it has been

deemed safe re-opening as of 4 pm and that all operational supervisors will enact the inclement weather early re-opening procedure (below).

a. All unit supervisors will confirm with all part-time staff that existing i-work schedules for 4 p.m. to close are in effect. Supervisors may need to slightly alter current schedules to accommodate a 4 p.m. open. Programming may also be slightly altered.
b. Approved communication will be posted on gryphons.ca, social media channels.
c. Approved communication will be sent by email to:

- Permit holders
- NRG Members
- Registered program participants

d. Athletics Communication Staff will inform central Communications and Marketing of the reopening, Communications and Marketing will update internal postings as appropriate.
e. Communications and Marketing will update messaging for the University's main phone line greeting message.

Source URL:https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/staff-faculty-hr-policies-all-employees/512-hazardous-weather-emergency-closing-procedures-all-staff

Links
[1] https://www.uoguelph.ca/campus-status/