



Complete Policy Title	Policy on Closure of Campus or Instructional Site Due to Inclement Weather or Other Environmental Factors
Approved by	MD Executive Committee
Date of Original Approval	October 1, 2014
Date of Most Recent Approval	
Supersedes/Amends Policy dated	

Related Policies:

- McMaster University *Storm Emergency Policy and Procedures*
- MD Program *Policy for Missed Evaluation Exercises*
- MD Program *Leaves of Absence Policy*
- MD Program *Professionalism in Practice Expectations*

Background:

The core curriculum of McMaster’s MD Program is offered across multiple sites covering a wide geography focused within southwestern Ontario. While on electives, students will also travel throughout the province, nation, and globe. Throughout the year, it is typical to have occasional, intermittent suspension of regular academic and/or clinical duties due to inclement weather, natural disasters, campus service interruptions or other environmental factors. Often, the conditions leading to suspension of regular activities are present and consistent throughout the geographical locations where students are participating in program activities; however, it is also not unusual that different conditions exist in different locations such that suspension of activities is not consistently required in all teaching sites for a given group or cohort of students. Additionally, technologies now make it possible to conduct many activities from ones residence, enabling activities to continue without significant disruption, despite closure of central, institutional facilities. This policy addresses the process by which decisions will be made in the UGME Program to suspend academic or clinical activities due to weather, disaster or other environmental factors. *Definitions and use of language:*

- Language used in this document to indicate the plural should be substituted for the singular where appropriate (e.g. students, their; student, his/her).
- “Local” – pertaining to the immediate campus and/or clinical site for which the individual has administrative authority.

Considerations:

This policy was written with the following considerations in mind:

- As a distributed medical education program, with core programming across multiple sites throughout southwestern Ontario, environmental and facilities conditions may vary widely across sites.
 - As the degree-granting university, other McMaster University policies related to this policy will take priority.
 - As per affiliation agreements with clinical site partners, clinical site policies will take priority for students in the clinical setting. Occasionally, it may be necessary to balance clinical site practices with those of McMaster University and the MD Program.
 - Attempts will be made to limit disruptions to the educational programming as much as possible while balancing the safety of students.
 - The availability of personal, technology-supported meeting options (e.g. Skype) makes it possible for groups to meet from a variety of locations.
- Medical students have multiple roles and learning activities within the medical education program, including, mandatory academic sessions (e.g. tutorials, Professional Competencies, clinical skills, clerkship academic sessions), non-mandatory academic sessions (e.g. pre-Clerkship large group sessions, anatomy, etc.), core clinical obligations (e.g. daily and on-call responsibilities), elective clinical obligations, and mandatory assessment activities (e.g. PPI, OSCE, CAE's, PIE's, clerkship exams, etc.).
 - Although cumbersome and administratively intensive, most academic sessions or mandatory assessments can be cancelled due to facility closure and rebooked at a later date without impacting on the student's ability to proceed satisfactorily in the program.
 - While medical students usually play key roles on healthcare teams, these teams should be able to operate without the presence of students, especially for brief periods of time.
- As developing professionals, medical students will be urged to balance their professional obligations (e.g. academic and clinical responsibilities) with considerations of their own health and safety. Students are expected to make decisions regarding their ability to safely participate in learning activities and to make appropriate arrangements for absences; as such, these activities will be guided by the School of Medicine's *Professionalism In Practice Expectations*.
- Medical students are evaluated by their tutors and supervisors, as well as other members of their groups or healthcare teams. It is recognized that team members may put pressure on students to participate in activities which may impede their safety. This policy gives students the ability to avoid participating in learning activities that may require unsafe travel or that may involve unsafe learning environment conditions.

Procedures:

1. Determination of Closure or Discontinuation of Learning Activities:
 - a. A campus will be deemed “closed” if the geographically associated university campus has declared a closure.
 - i. For the Hamilton Campus, the campus is closed if McMaster University is closed;
 - ii. For the Niagara Regional Campus, the campus is closed if Brock University is closed; and,
 - iii. For the Waterloo Regional Campus, the campus is closed if University of Waterloo is closed.
 - b. A Medical Education Campus may also close at the discretion of the MD Program leadership as outlined in 2.b. below.
 - c. A clinical site will be deemed “closed” at the discretion of each clinical site. Clinical site closures may include a closure in which:
 - i. The facility remains operational but prohibits participation or attendance of students on site;
 - ii. The facility reduces operations; or,
 - iii. The facility closes and ceases all healthcare activities.
 - d. Learning activities within the MD Program may be discontinued or postponed at the discretion of the MD Program, even when campuses or clinical sites remain open. Such decisions will be made following consultation of the MD Program leadership as outlined in 2.b. below and including appropriate curricular and assessment faculty leads (e.g. Pre-Clerkship Chair, Professional Competencies Co-Chairs, Clerkship Chair, Student Assessment Chair, Clinical Skills Chair).
2. Communication of closures and discontinuation of learning activities:
 - a. The procedure outlined below should be followed for notifications of campus or site closures, discontinuation of learning activities, and updates with respect to closures and discontinuations, including plans for reopening and resumption of activities.
 - b. Campus closures will be communicated amongst the respective campus leadership: Assistant Dean (UGME), Regional Assistant Deans, Program Manager (UGME), and Regional Campus Program Administrators.
 - c. Where possible and appropriate, uniform messages will be communicated.
 - d. Notifications will be made by email or other commonly accepted communication format. MD Program leadership as described in (2.b.) will be copied on all such communications to ensure that all campuses remain aware of messaging.
 - e. All closures will be communicated to any students, faculty leaders, other faculty, and administrators participating in or responsible for the same learning activities at other sites (e.g. if a clerkship rotation is affected by a closure, then all faculty leads, students, other faculty and administrators involved in that same rotation at all sites during the period of closure will be notified of the closure).

- f. Initial messaging of any closure or discontinuation of learning activities will be accompanied by a copy of or online reference to this policy.
 - g. Respective campus leadership will be responsible for notifying local leaders, students and administrators as described below and as elaborated in Appendix A.
 - i. Hamilton Campus leadership will be responsible for notifying:
 - 1. Students: All students in MF1 and Hamilton Campus-based students during all other elements of the Program.
 - 2. Faculty Leadership: All Chairs and Directors of the MD Program with oversight of multiple campus programming.
 - 3. Faculty Teachers: All Hamilton Campus-based non-clinical teachers (e.g. tutors, longitudinal facilitators, and clinical skills preceptors).
 - 4. Other faculty: Student Advisors.
 - 5. Clinical faculty: See below.
 - 6. Administrators: All local administrative staff.
 - ii. Regional Campus leadership will be responsible for notifying:
 - 1. Students: All respective Regional Campus-based students in MF2 and thereafter.
 - 2. Faculty Leadership: All local faculty leaders.
 - 3. Other faculty including clinical faculty: All other local faculty including faculty teachers and student advisors of students potentially impacted by the closure.
 - 4. Administrators: All local administrative staff.
 - iii. Clinical faculty in rotations outside of Regional Campuses: The Clerkship rotation leads will be responsible for notifying clinical faculty outside of the Regional Campuses.
 - h. Ongoing communication amongst program leadership will continue for the duration of the closure following the guidelines above.
3. Impact of Closure on Learning Activities:
- a. Students should always assess their ability to travel safely to and from their learning sites and make travel plans accordingly.
 - b. Where students feel that it is unsafe for them to travel, but there is no closure or discontinuation of learning activities, students should:
 - i. Notify their respective campus administrator, their immediate supervisor (e.g. tutor, LF, clinical skills preceptor, clinical supervisor, etc.), and the local faculty lead for the learning activity that is affected, of their intention to be absent and the reason for the absence;
 - ii. Indicate the expected duration of absence; and,
 - iii. Make appropriate arrangements to make up the missed activities, including coverage of clinical and administrative responsibilities as required.
 - c. Students should not be pressured into participating in learning activities when a local campus closure due to weather or natural disaster is in effect or if students feel that it is unsafe for them to travel. Students should

report such behaviour to their local campus or curriculum leadership, to Student Affairs, or to the MD Program.

- d. Where a local campus closure of brief expected duration (e.g. weather, campus service interruption, or natural disaster) is in effect, students have the option of participating in previously scheduled learning activities that have not been officially cancelled. A campus closure means that campus learning sites (e.g. classrooms, meeting rooms, simulation centres, etc.) will also be closed; however, clinical sites may still be operating under normal or constrained schedules. The following guidelines, by learning activity type, should be followed.
 - i. *Large group sessions:*
 1. Large group sessions will be cancelled in closed campuses.
 2. If a LGS is being videoconferenced from a closed campus, the LGS will be cancelled at all campuses.
 3. If a LGS is being videoconferenced from an open campus when another campus is closed, it will proceed provided that there is the means and consent for recording of the LGS. If either the means or consent for recording does not exist, the LGS will be cancelled.
 4. Students may not be assessed on the content of a recorded LGS that occurred during a closure until the content has been posted for their review.
 5. If the LGS recording can not be posted, the curriculum Director or Planner must offer a reasonable substitute for the curriculum content.
 - ii. *Small group sessions (e.g. tutorials, ProComp sessions, clinical skills, etc.):*
 1. If it is possible for all members of the group who were normally expected to participate to do so, then the group should make alternate arrangements to meet.
 2. The group should not meet if all members who were expected to be in attendance are unable to meet.
 3. Groups may choose to meet via any method acceptable to all members.
 - iii. *CAEs and PIEs*
 1. If any campus is closed on the day that a CAE or PIE is scheduled, the CAE or PIE will be cancelled for students at all campuses and re-scheduled as soon as possible.
 - iv. *Academic sessions during clinical rotations:*
 1. Local clerkship faculty leads (e.g. Clerkship Directors and Regional Education Leaders) will determine whether and how sessions will proceed. This should be communicated to students in a timely manner.
 2. In the case of a campus closure, it is not necessary for students to attend academic sessions and Clerkship leads

should determine an alternate format for covering the curriculum content.

- v. *Clinical responsibilities during clinical rotations:*
 - 1. When there is a local campus closure, students may use discretion in determining whether they will participate in clinical duties at their assigned clinical sites.
 - 2. When there is not a local campus closure, but weather or working environment conditions pose an unacceptably elevated risk to student safety, local clerkship faculty leads, local site leads, or supervisors may use discretion in advising students that they are not expected to participate in clinical learning activities. In this instance, the Chair of Clerkship and Electives should be notified.
 - e. Where a clinical site closure or discontinuation of local clinical and/or academic learning activities is in effect, local rotation leadership (e.g. Clerkship Director, Regional Education Leader, Site Coordinator) will consult broadly with campus leadership and clinical site leadership to determine how to manage student learning activities, including:
 - i. Briefly cancelling or postponing previously scheduled learning activities;
 - ii. Temporarily reassigning students to another clinical site; or,
 - iii. Permanently reassigning students to another clinical site for the balance of the rotation.
 - f. Where a local campus closure or a clinical site closure of a prolonged expected duration is in effect, the MD Program will make alternate arrangements for learning activities to resume as soon as possible. Procedures described above and below will apply, including determination of a closure, communication, etc.
 - g. Where students are assigned to alternate learning sites, the MD Program will take into consideration the impact on students, including, the impact on their learning in the current curriculum element, the cost of changing sites, etc. As such, appropriately altering assessment activities, curriculum configurations, and funding should be considered as necessary.
4. Making up Missed Time:
- a. In the case of a campus or clinical site closure of three days or less, students will not be expected to make up the missed time.
 - b. In the case of a campus or clinical site closure of greater than three days, every attempt should first be made to anticipate a prolonged closure and follow 3.f. above. Where a prolonged closure was unexpected, students will be required to make up an appropriate amount of missed curriculum.
 - c. If appropriate, curriculum leads should consider if the missed content should be made up and determine how that will be accomplished.
 - d. Missed time or learning activities should be made up with similar learning activities (e.g. clinical learning should be made up with clinical learning; academic learning made up with academic learning).

Determination of Closure*

Determination of Closure/or Continuation of Learning Activities

Hamilton Campus is closed if
McMaster University is closed

Niagara Regional Campus is closed if
Brock University is closed

Waterloo Regional Campus is closed if
University of Waterloo is closed

- OR -

Medical Education Campus is closed at the discretion of MD Program Leadership**

A clinical site is deemed closed at the discretion of each clinical site:

Facility remains operational but prohibits participation or attendance of students on site;

- OR -

Facility reduces operations;

-OR-

Facility closes and ceases all healthcare activities.

Learning activities within the MD Program may be discontinued or postponed at the discretion of the MD Program, even when campuses or clinical sites remain open.***

Communication of Closures and Discontinuation of Learning Activities

Campus closures will be communicated amongst MD Program Leadership**

Notifications will be made by email or other commonly accepted communication formats

All closures will be communicated to any students, faculty leaders, other faculty, and administrators participating in or responsible for the same learning activities at other sites.

Hamilton Campus Leadership Notifies:

- ✓ All students in MF1 and Hamilton Campus-based students during all other elements of Program
- ✓ Faculty Leadership (Chairs and Directors of the MD Program)
- ✓ All Hamilton Campus-based non-clinical teachers (e.g. tutors, longitudinal facilitators, and clinical skills preceptors).
- ✓ Other faculty: Student Advisors, etc.
- ✓ Local Clinical faculty
- ✓ Administrative staff

Regional Campus Leadership Notifies:

- ✓ Regional based students in MF2 and thereafter
- ✓ All local Faculty Leadership:
- ✓ Local Faculty Teachers
- ✓ Other Faculty: Local Student Advisors, etc.
- ✓ Local Clinical Faculty
- ✓ Local Administrative staff

Clinical Faculty in Rotations Outside of Regional Campuses:

- ✓ The Clerkship rotation leads will be responsible for notifying clinical faculty outside of the Regional Campuses.

Impact of Closure on Learning Activities

Students should always assess their ability to travel safely to and from their learning sites and make travel plans accordingly.

If student feels unsafe to travel but no closure, they should:

1. Notify their respective campus administrator, their immediate supervisor (e.g. tutor, LF, clinical skills preceptor, clinical supervisor, etc.), and the local faculty lead for the learning activity that is affected,
2. Indicate the expected duration of absence; and,
3. Make appropriate arrangements to make up the missed activities, including coverage of clinical and administrative responsibilities as required.

Students should not be pressured into participating in learning activities when local campus closure or if student feels unsafe to travel. Students should report such behavior.

Please refer to the guidelines in the Policy, (Section 3.d) for each learning activity type including large and small group sessions, CAEs and PIEs, and clinical responsibilities during clinical rotations.

Making up Missed Time

Closure less than 3 days?

Students will not be expected to make up the missed time.

Closure more than 3 days?

Students will be required to make up an appropriate amount of missed curriculum.

Missed time or learning activities should be made up with similar learning activities (e.g. clinical learning should be made up with clinical learning; academic learning made up with academic learning).

MD Program will make alternate arrangements for learning activities to resume as soon as possible.

* For the complete Policy on Closure of Campus or Instructional Site Due to Inclement Weather or other Environmental Factors, please visit: www.medportal.ca/ug/student-information/policies-and-procedures

** MD Program Leadership: Assistant Dean (UGME), Regional Assistant Deans, Program Manager (UGME), and Regional Campus Program Administrators.

*** Such decisions will be made following consultation of MD Program and including appropriate curricular and assessment faculty leads (e.g. Pre-Clerkship Chair, Professional Competencies Co-Chairs, Clerkship Chair, Student Assessment Chair, Clinical Skills Chair).