



POLICY & PROCEDURES

QA CODE: QA169
TITLE: Policy for Campus Closure on Health and Safety grounds due to a Severe Weather Forecast or Conditions.
DATE: February 2019

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the circumstances in which a complete closure of the university campus, or specific parts of the campus, might occur in response to weather alert warnings from Met Éireann and the procedures for making that decision and effecting any operational arrangements.

Background

Weather Events are codified by Met Éireann as follows:

- **STATUS YELLOW** – Weather Alert – Be Aware
The concept behind YELLOW level weather alerts is to notify those who are at risk because of their location and/or activity, and to allow them to take preventative action. It is implicit that YELLOW level weather alerts are for weather conditions that do not pose an immediate threat to the general population, but only to those exposed to risk by nature of their location and/or activity.
- **STATUS ORANGE** – Weather Warning – Be Prepared
This category of ORANGE level weather warnings is for weather conditions which have the capacity to impact significantly on people in the affected areas. The issue of an Orange level weather warning implies that all recipients in the affected areas should prepare themselves in an appropriate way for the anticipated conditions.
- **STATUS RED** – Severe Weather Warning – Take Action
The issue of RED level severe weather warnings should be a comparatively rare event and implies that recipients take action to protect themselves and/or their properties; this could be by moving their families out of the danger zone temporarily; by staying indoors; or by other specific actions aimed at mitigating the effects of the weather conditions.

The types of conditions giving rise to warnings that would impact on safe campus operations include wind, rain, snow, low temperatures, fog, high temperatures, thunderstorms, and coastal wind warnings.

Met Éireann confirms that “Weather Alerts and Warnings will be issued whenever weather conditions meeting the detailed thresholds defined above are anticipated within a 48-hr period. There will be judgement required on the part of the forecaster who must weigh up the possible severity of the weather conditions and the likelihood of their occurrence. However on some occasions (weekends, holiday periods) it may be necessary to issue Weather Warnings beyond this 48-hr horizon, if sufficient certainty derives from examination of the weather charts. Normally, however, a Weather Advisory will be used to flag severe weather beyond 48hrs and Advisories will normally anticipate only “Orange” or “Red” criteria weather hazards.” For additional information, go to <https://www.met.ie/weather-warnings>.

2.0 Policy

The safety of our University community is our top priority. Severe weather events have safety implications and therefore the response to these must be given due priority by the entire community.

It is up to each individual staff member, student, contractor, supplier, or visitor to the campus to assess the safety of travelling in the event of a weather warning issuing from Met Éireann. This applies to all three warning types. As the University operates multiple, geographically dispersed, campuses, this assessment relates to the campus in which an individual is, or will be, based at the time of the weather alert. If travel is planned then the assessment should consider weather warnings on the planned route and also at the planned destination.

In the event of a **STATUS RED** warning issuing for a university campus (see list at Appendix 1), the default position is that the campus will be closed until the warning has been downgraded to **STATUS ORANGE** or **STATUS YELLOW** or none. Closed means that all operations will cease and only the minimum number of staff (pre-approved and following risk assessment) required to safeguard the campus or maintain critical operations and systems will be allowed access to the campus. No one who is subject to the provisions of this policy should attempt to travel to or through any area to which a **STATUS RED** warning applies. This may require the development and implementation of local management arrangements and procedures e.g. in the case of on-campus residences where students/guests may already be in residence when an event occurs.

In the event of a **STATUS ORANGE** warning issuing for a university campus (see list at Appendix 1), the University will monitor the situation and assess, to the extent possible, the likely safety risk attaching to the event and act accordingly. This will continue until the warning has been downgraded to **STATUS YELLOW** or none. In the event that the event is upgraded to **STATUS RED** the campus will close.

In the event of a **STATUS YELLOW** warning issuing for a university campus (see list at Appendix 1), the University will monitor the situation and assess, to the extent possible, the likely safety risk attaching to the event and act accordingly. This will continue until the warning has been lifted. In the event that the event is upgraded to **STATUS ORANGE** or **STATUS RED** the arrangements for such events will apply. It is unlikely that a yellow event would lead to full closure.

In the unlikely event of severe weather conditions arising without a pre-warning from Met Éireann, or worsening in the course of the working day, the University will respond to the situation as it evolves/develops, in line with the principles of this policy, and will communicate accordingly. Normal health and safety duty of care responsibilities will continue to apply.

The University will monitor a number of weather forecasting sources and will also refer to the deliberations of and communications from: the National Emergency Planning Group, An Garda Síochána, Transport Services, Galway City and County Councils, and the Department of Education and Skills.

3.0 Communications

In the event of **STATUS RED** warnings, Met Éireann should be the primary source of information. The University will endeavour to centrally issue communications to staff, students, and the visiting public in the lead up to, during, and in the aftermath of such events.

The primary source of up to date University communications and information will be www.nuigalway.ie/alert.

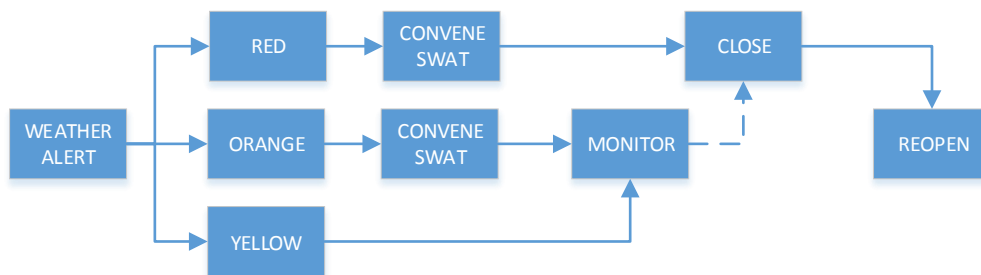
4.0 Responsibilities

PERSON/ UNIT	RESPONSIBILITY
University Management Team	Policy approval.
Chief Operating Officer	Review decisions communicated by COO. Policy owner Convene SWAT (Severe Weather Alert Team) Decision to close. Communications
Buildings & Estates	Regular review and update of this policy. Member of SWAT. Monitor weather alerts. Advise decisions and actions. Implement decisions. Pre-event safety measures. Safe closure and securing campus. Periodic inspections. Communications to COO. Facilitate access to essential activities e.g. bio resource units Post-event inspections Make safe campus.

PERSON/ UNIT	RESPONSIBILITY
Health & Safety	Provide 'all clear'. Re-open campus. Provide and deploy all necessary safety equipment and signage. Member of SWAT. Corporate safety role. Safety oversight and advisory role in relation to a weather forecast leading to closure. Communications with civil authorities.
Heads of Schools, Disciplines, Units	Ensure staff, students and contractors abide by closure. Provide contact details for all essential activities staff. Re-schedule any impacted teaching and associated activities. Risk assess all activities; implement all necessary safety precautions in response to severe weather events. Ensure adequate arrangements exist for delegated authority for decision-making in the event of leave/absence/unavailability.
Marketing & Communications	In-unit communications. Member of SWAT Messaging Development Website updates Social media updates NUI Galway app notifications Media liaison Switchboard communications
Human Resources	Member of SWAT All staff communications. Address any staffing issues arising.
Registrar and Deputy President	Member of SWAT Address any academic issues arising.
SU President	Member of SWAT
Student Services	Member of SWAT All student communications.
Commercial Services	Member of SWAT Manage commercial activities impacts. Communications with operators and customers. Residences impacts.

All members of the SWAT should have arrangements in place so that decision-making authority is delegated to an appropriate representative of their respective unit in the event of leave/ absence/ unavailability.

Procedure Schematic



Notes:

1. Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures for the SWAT will be the subject of a separate procedures document.
2. SWAT member is Unit Head or Nominee:
 - COO
 - Health and Safety
 - Registrar & Deputy President
 - Buildings and Estates
 - Commercial Services
 - Human Resources
 - Marketing and Communications
 - Student Services
 - Students Union

Appendix 1 List of NUI Galway Campuses

Main Campus at NUI Galway, Galway City.

NUI Galway buildings at University Hospital Galway, Galway City.

Medical Academy buildings at Ballinasloe, Letterkenny, Sligo, and Castlebar

Acadamh na hOllscoile, Ceathrú Rua, Co. Gaillimh

Acadamh na hOllscoile, Carna, Co. Gaillimh

Acadamh na hOllscoile, Gaoth Dobhair, Co Dun na nGall

Carna (Mweenish), Mace Head, Co Galway.

Finnevara, Co Galway.

Carron, Co Clare.

Shannon College, Co Clare.