**Policy: GCSU Modified Operations Policy and Procedures**

**Approval Date:**

**Effective Date:**

**Contact Information: GCSU Office of Human Resources, (478) 445-5596**

**Purpose:**
This policy outlines how campus operations may be modified to ensure that students, faculty, and staff can effectively manage academic responsibilities and operations during inclement weather conditions or other emergencies that may cause the university to delay opening or move to modified operations.

**Scope:**
This policy applies to all students, faculty, and staff. This policy is implemented at the university level and applies to the institution as a whole and does not apply to individual cases.

**Associated Policies/Regulations:**

University System of Georgia’s [Human Resources Administrative Manual; *Time Away From Work: Inclement Weather Or Other Emergencies*](https://www.usg.edu/hr/assets/hr/hrap_manual/HRAP_Inclement_Weather_or_Other_Emergencies_Time_Away_from_Work.pdf)

**Definitions and Terms:**

*Inclement weather:* Inclement weather is a term used to describe harsh weather conditions that are dangerous or undesirable.  Examples of inclement weather can include blizzards, floods, hurricanes, hail, high winds, snow, and extreme temperatures. Inclement weather is often accompanied by conditions that make it unsafe or unreasonable for work or travel to campus.

*Emergency:* a situation that may place the health or safety of students, employees, or citizens

at risk requiring immediate action, or conditions or events that prevent the performance of regular university operations.

*Campus closure:* When an institution is declared closed, all academic classes, administrative offices, or other functional areas are suspended and only essential services are maintained, until the institution is officially reopened as declared by the President.

*Modified Operations:* Temporary changes to university operations in response to an emergency

which may include early closure, delayed opening or a shift to remote work

*Essential Personnel:* Faculty and staff who must report to their designated work location to

ensure the operation of essential functions or departments during an emergency or when the

institution has suspended operations**.** Departments or positions that are considered essential are

designated by the appropriate Cabinet member, Vice President, Associate Provost, or Academic Dean and may depend upon the circumstances surrounding the emergency.

*Non-essential Personnel:*Employees not expected to report to campus during emergencies.

*Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning:* Synchronous learning is when students and instructors learn and interact together in real-time, even if they're in different locations. This can happen in person or online. Asynchronous learning describes a situation in which instruction and learning do not necessarily occur in the same place or at the same time.

**Policy:**

Georgia College & State University (GCSU) is committed to remaining open and continuing full operations, including class schedules, whenever possible.

The Office of the President, in consultation with the GCSU Office of Public Safety and other applicable institutional officials will determine when inclement weather or an emergency impacts GCSU’s normal operations. Per the USG *Inclement Weather or Other Emergencies Policy*, when the university is **closed** due to weather conditions or an emergency, all classes will be canceled, and non-essential personnel will not be expected to work. This policy herein describes the university in a state of modified operations, not university closure.

When the University shifts to modified operations, Cabinet members, in consultation with the Office of the President or designee, will be responsible for determining appropriate operational continuity for their divisions, which may include remote work. During modified operations, each faculty member will be responsible for instructional continuity for their classes. To ensure instructional continuity, all Academic Colleges and Departments are expected to maintain and regularly update instructional continuity plans. All syllabi should also include an instructional continuity plan statement specific to that course.

During a weather event or other emergency, those commuting to campus should exercise their best judgment when determining travel options. If the University remains open and an employee elects not to report to work, the employee will be required to use their accrued vacation time.

**Procedures:**

**1. Modified Operations:**

Modified Operations (MO) are temporary changes to university operations- which may include early closure, delayed opening, or a shift to remote work/learning – in response to inclement weather or other emergencies. In the event of inclement weather or an emergency that requires the university to operate on a modified schedule, an official announcement will be made through the following channels:

* **University Website**
* **GC Alert**
* **University Email**
* **University social media accounts**

Once a decision has been made, updates will be communicated as early as possible to allow students, faculty, and staff to make necessary arrangements.

**2. Class Continuity and Remote Learning:**

When the university is in Modified Operations due to inclement weather or other emergency, the USG expects GCSU faculty and students to maintain academic continuity. GCSU will maintain such academic continuity using GeorgiaVIEW(GCSU’s LMS), most preferably, or other communication and collaboration online platforms. Class continuity can include synchronous learning, as conditions allow, or asynchronous delivery of instruction. The following guidelines apply:

2.1 Faculty Responsibilities:

* **Communication:** Upon official notification from the university and as soon as safe and feasible, faculty members should notify their students immediately about the shift to remote learning and provide clear instructions for continuing course activities.
* **Course Delivery:** Instruction may be delivered synchronously or asynchronously. Regardless, faculty should post all relevant materials (e.g., lectures, reading assignments, discussion forums, and assessments) on GeorgiaVIEW (preferred) due to the potential that students will not have access to textbooks or other instructional materials. These relevant and necessary materials should be designed to maintain the learning objectives of the course for the duration of modified operations, allowing students to complete assignments in a timely and reasonable manner.
* **Office Hours:** Faculty should be available for virtual office hours through GeorgiaVIEW, email, or video conferencing tools during their normally scheduled times to assist students with any questions or concerns.
* **Assessment Adjustments:** If any exams or assignments were scheduled during the time of the modified operations period, faculty may reschedule or move assessments online. Faculty should communicate these changes clearly through GeorgiaVIEW or other forms of communication with the students.
* **Syllabus Notification:** At the beginning of each semester, faculty should provide a contingency plan in their syllabus describing expectations to students during modified operations periods.

2.2 Student Responsibilities:

* **Accessing GeorgiaVIEW or other learning/collaboration platforms:** Students should log into GeorgiaVIEW and/or email regularly during times of modified operations to check for updates, assignments, and announcements from instructors.
* **Engagement:** Students are expected to participate in any scheduled online discussions, submit assignments through GeorgiaVIEW or other modality, and complete assessments within the provided deadlines as conditions allow.
* **Communication:** If students experience difficulties accessing course materials, or have communications or technology interruptions, they should promptly reach out to their instructor or the appropriate department for assistance, circumstances permitting.

**3. Employee Work Expectations While Under MO:**

* **Communication:** Employees are responsible for monitoring official university communication channels and messaging from their immediate supervisor, to remain informed about the status of campus operation.
* **Engagement:** Employees are expected to perform their standard work duties during periods of modified operations. In cases of emergencies where departments did not have advanced notice to gather their laptops ahead of working remotely, employees who do not have their laptop may take vacation time. If sufficient accrued vacation time is not available, employees will be uncompensated for that period. Supervisors should work with faculty and staff to ensure equipment is provided to maintain work responsibilities.
* **Work Hours:** Employees are expected to work during standard business hours in the event of a transition to modified operations.
* **Compensation:** Please reference the chart below. *Note: Non-Exempt employees are paid bi-weekly; Exempt employees are paid monthly.*

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| --- | --- |
| Non-Exempt essential personnel who report to campus at the direction of their supervisor | Paid for their actual hours worked PLUS receive eight (8) hours inclement weather pay |
| Regular, benefits eligible Non-Exempt employees (do not report to work) OR Essential Non-Exempt workers who do not report to work | Receive up to eight (8) hours inclement weather pay (pro-rated for part-time employees) |
| Non-Exempt staff members who work an alternate work schedule and who are not scheduled to work on the day campus is closed | Will not receive inclement weather pay |
| All other Non-Exempt employees including student, temporary or casual labor (do not report to work) | Will not receive inclement weather pay |
| Exempt Faculty and Staff | Will be paid regular pay during campus closure |
| **Modified Operations** |
| Non-Exempt essential personnel who report to work  | Paid for actual hours worked during the modified operations period PLUS are paid for their regular work shift/hours  |
| Regular, benefits eligible Non-Exempt employees (do not report to work) OR Essential Non-Exempt employees who do not report to work | Receive up to eight (8) hours inclement weather pay (pro-rated for part-time employees) |
| Regular, Non-Exempt benefits eligible staff who are advised to work remotely during the modified operations period | Paid for hours worked (non-exempt) OR paid vacation time if they do not work. If they do not have accrued vacation, they will go uncompensated during this time. |
| All other Non-Exempt employees including student, temporary or casual labor (do not report to work)  | Will not receive inclement weather pay for the time campus is closed  |
| Exempt Faculty and Staff | Will be paid regular pay during any campus closure |

3.1 Non-Essential Employees:

For non-essential staff, the university will make decisions regarding on-campus presence based on operational needs during the closure. Non-essential employees should:

* **Work from Home (if possible):** If remote work is feasible, employees are expected to perform their duties remotely, with tasks assigned via email or through the university’s communication systems.
* **Attendance Reporting:** Non-essential staff who are unable to work remotely must notify their supervisor as soon as possible regarding their availability.

3.2 Essential Employees:

Essential employees will be required to report to work unless otherwise notified by their unit head or supervisor. Essential employees are those whose job functions are critical to the university’s operations during an inclement weather event. These employees are expected to report to work even when the university is closed or operating under limited services.

Essential employees may include:

* Facilities staff (e.g., maintenance, custodians)
* Campus safety and security personnel
* Division of Student Life staff designated by the Vice President
* IT support for critical services
* Other personnel as designated by their department head

Employees who are unsure if they are considered essential or non-essential staff should seek clarification from their direct supervisor.

**4. Exceptions and Special Circumstances**

In certain cases, specific courses, programs, or departments may require in-person attendance (e.g., labs, clinicals, practica, etc.) for course-based experiences. Deans, department chairs, and faculty are responsible for determining appropriate alternative arrangements and communicating them to students.

**5. Communication During Extended Closure(s) and/or Modified Operations:**

In the event of extended inclement weather or other emergency conditions, the university will provide regular updates regarding the status of campus reopening, course adjustments, and campus operations, and other important information. These updates will be communicated through the university’s website, GeorgiaVIEW, GC Alert, email, and other university social media sites.

The safety and well-being of the university community are paramount. Continuity of instruction during inclement weather conditions or other emergencies ensures that academic progress can continue without significant disruption. All members of the university are encouraged to stay informed and adapt to the university’s remote learning infrastructure during these times. By working together and following the guidelines of this policy, we can navigate weather-related or emergency challenges effectively, ensure the continuation of essential academic and operational activities, and comply with the university’s accreditation requirements.

**\*\*Recommend that the Office of Human Resources’ my.gcsu page be expanded to include a reference to the Policy & Procedures outlined above, with the compensation table and FAQs added, to include the following:**

**FAQ**

**Who will notify me if I am essential personnel?**

Your immediate supervisor will inform you if you are considered essential personnel for the specific situation.

**What is expected of faculty during modified operations?**

During modified operations, faculty members are responsible for instructional continuity for their classes. All faculty members should have an instructional continuity statement in their syllabi no later than Fall 2026 detailing what instructional continuity means for that particular class.

**How are decisions about GCSU’s operations during inclement weather made?**

The Office of the President, in consultation with the GCSU Office of Public Safety and other applicable institutional officials, will determine when inclement weather or an emergency impacts GCSU’s normal operations.

**Will classes be canceled if GCSU is closed due to an emergency?**

Yes, if GCSU is closed due to an emergency, all classes will be canceled, and non-essential personnel will not be expected to work.

**What should I do if I am required to report to work during an emergency?**

If you are designated as Essential Employee, you are required to report to your designated work location to ensure the operation of essential functions or departments during an emergency.

**What is Inclement Weather Pay (Closure Pay)?**

Inclement Weather Pay, also known as Closure Pay, is paid leave provided due to the unforeseen closure of a University System of Georgia (USG) institution in the event of inclement weather or any emergency. This closure must be declared by the institution’s President.

**What should I do if GCSU remains open, but I feel unsafe commuting to campus?**

If GCSU remains open and you decide not to report to work due to safety concerns, you must first notify your immediate supervisor, then you will need to use your accrued vacation time.  If you do not have sufficient accrued vacation time, you will be uncompensated for that time.

**If an employee has scheduled for sick and/or vacation leave during a campus closure, are they eligible for closure pay?**

If an employee has approved leave during a closure, they may be allowed to change to closure pay.

**If I am scheduled off during a campus closure, will I receive inclement weather pay?**

No, only those scheduled to work during a closure will be paid during those times that are deemed closed.

**Do students, temporary and casual workers receive inclement weather pay?**

No, only regular full-time and part-time employees are eligible.

**What is the plan for communicating to employees if their building has no power or access is restricted?**

All departments should have a designated communication plan. Cabinet members will communicate to their division leaders, who will be expected to activate their plan and communicate any closure information and expectations around working with all faculty and staff.

**What happens if I lose power at home if we are remote? Do I have to take accrued vacation?**

If campus is open under modified operations, and you are expected to work remotely, but cannot due to power outages in your area, you should notify your supervisor and determine what options are available to you.

**What if we are under modified operations and I am expected to work remotely but didn’t bring my laptop home?**

We typically have advance notice of storms. However, if we have an emergency, campus is not closed/we are under MO which has your department expected to work remotely and you do not have your laptop, you may take vacation time. If you do not have sufficient accrued vacation time, you will be uncompensated for that time.

**If I have the ability to work remotely but decide to take the day off instead, will I be paid inclement weather pay?**

If campus is closed due to an emergency, and you are not considered essential personnel, you will not be expected to work. If campus is on modified operations and the Vice President of your division has you designated to work remotely, you will be expected to work remotely. Should you need to take vacation time, you should discuss with your supervisor at the beginning of the event.

**If we move to modified operations due to weather and local schools or daycares are closed, how should remote workers proceed?**

While working remotely offers flexibility, business continuity should be maintained. Remote work is not a replacement for childcare and/or other personal responsibilities. If challenges in fulfilling work responsibilities are anticipated due to caregiving needs, supervisors and employees should discuss whether it is appropriate to take full or partial vacation hours.