

Policy #FA005: Operating Status

Recommended for Approval by: 
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Executive Director of Human Resources

Approved by: 
Jon Anderson, Ph.D.
President

Effective Date: 07/01/2026

A. Intent

Pennsylvania Western University (PennWest) is committed to protecting the safety of students, faculty, staff, and visitors while maintaining continuity of instruction and essential operations during inclement weather or other hazardous conditions.

In the event of extraordinary weather or other hazardous conditions, it may be necessary for the University to modify its operating schedule.

This policy establishes a 4-status system of operations that applies to all PennWest campuses and University-sponsored activities. Operating decisions may apply University-wide, to one or more campuses, or to a specific timeframe (e.g., morning, afternoon, or evening).

Announcements regarding changes to the operating status will be made by 6:00 a.m. All faculty, staff, and students are responsible for monitoring official University communications for updates.

Students participating in internships, student teaching, clinicals, or other off-site placements must follow the host site's operating procedures.

B. Definition(s)

Operating Status refers to the capacity at which the university is operating (e.g., normal, delayed operations, early release, or essential only).

Essential Operations means University non-instructional functions or services needed to maintain necessary provisions for students, faculty and/or staff despite or because of prevailing emergencies or hazardous conditions. Designated essential operations will be

maintained on campus during all operating statuses, including prevailing emergencies or other hazardous environmental conditions.

Essential Position as defined in [Policy HR011](#), means a position designated by the University as necessary to support essential operations and/or continuity of essential functions during any modified campus operating status, emergencies or hazardous conditions.

Essential Employee as defined in [Policy HR011](#), means an employee who occupies a designated essential position and is required to report to work and/or remain on duty during all operating statuses including prevailing emergencies or other hazardous environmental conditions.

Non-Essential Employee as defined in [Policy HR011](#), means an employee whose position has not been designated as essential and who is not required to report to work during authorized delayed openings, early releases, or essential only operating days, unless specifically directed by a supervisor.

Early Release means a planned or unplanned dismissal of employees and/or modification of classes before the end of the scheduled day. During early release, in-person classes and services may be canceled or moved to remote formats, and employees are directed to leave campus at a designated time unless they are identified as essential employees.

PennWest Shield is the University's mass notification system that sends urgent and emergency messages to the campus community via text, email, and other alert methods.

C. Policy Statement

Decision Authority

The authority to change the University's operating status resides with the President or designee. Individual supervisors may not independently delay, cancel, or implement early release without express authorization from the President or designee.

Communications

Official notice of delays, cancellations, closures, and early release will be communicated through the following channels:

- PennWest Shield
- [PennWest](#) homepage
- Official PennWest social media channels
- Active students, faculty, and staff will also receive notification via their PennWest email address

University Communications and Marketing is the sole authority responsible for issuing official campus operating status communications.

Operating Statuses

PennWest uses four operating statuses. Operating status may apply to a single campus, multiple campuses, or the entire University.

- **Normal Operations**
 - Classes and offices operate as scheduled.
 - If unable to report, essential and non-essential employees follow normal notice and leave procedures.

- **Delayed Campus Operations**
 - Administrative offices and non-essential services will open at the announced time (e.g., 10:00 a.m.).
 - In-person classes scheduled before the announced opening time are moved online when feasible.
 - Classes scheduled after the announced opening time meet as scheduled unless otherwise announced.
 - Essential employees report at their regular scheduled starting time.
 - Non-essential employees report at the announced opening time and are not required to use leave for the delayed hours.
- **Early Release Operations**
 - Classes scheduled after the early release time will be moved online when feasible.
 - Administrative offices and non-essential services will close at the announced early release time.
 - Essential employees remain on duty unless released by a supervisor.
 - Non-essential employees are dismissed at the early release time and are not required to use leave for the remaining hours of the workday.
- **Essential Operations Only**
 - Classes will be moved online when feasible.
 - Administrative offices and non-essential campus services will be closed.
 - Essential employees must report or remain on duty as directed.
 - Non-essential employees do not report to campus.

Essential Operations, Positions, and Employees

PennWest [Policy HR011](#): Essential and Non-Essential Personnel Designation establishes clear guidelines for designating essential and non-essential employees and defines work expectations, reporting requirements, and compensation practices during periods of inclement weather, hazardous environmental conditions, delayed openings, or full-day campus closures.

The policy ensures the continuity of critical University operations and services needed to maintain necessary provisions for students, faculty, and/or staff, despite or because of prevailing emergency or hazardous environmental conditions. Designated essential functions will be maintained on campus during all operating levels, including inclement weather or other hazardous conditions.

Non-Essential Employee Leave Requirements

Consistent with Commonwealth Management Directive 530.17:

- On the first day of Essential Operations Only Operating status, non-essential employees are not required to use accrued leave.
- Beginning on the second consecutive day of Essential Operations Only Operating Status, non-essential employees must use leave unless directed otherwise.

D. Related Policies

[Essential and Non-Essential Personnel Designation \(HR011\)](#)
[Staff Teleworking \(HR030\)](#)

E. Contact Information

For additional information, please contact the Office of Finance and Administration.

F. Policy Review Schedule

Each policy shall be reviewed by the corresponding Vice President on a regular basis as appropriate.