



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



STUDENT DEATH PROTOCOL

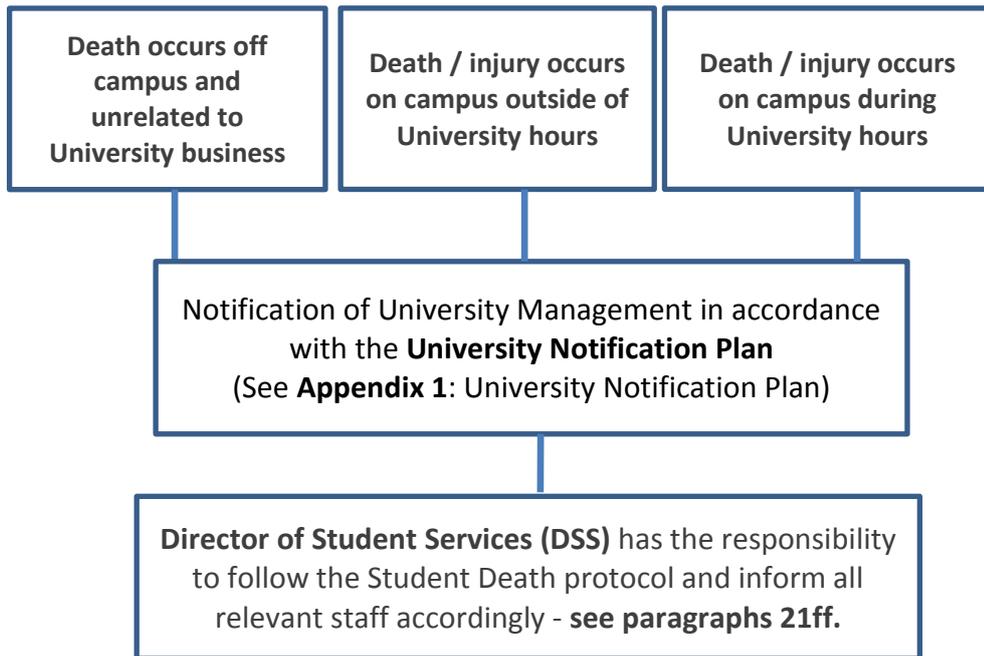
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Initial Notification Overview

Initial notification

- 1 It is expected that this process will operate year round including on closure days but if a death is reported out of hours then any follow up work should ordinarily be deferred to the next working day. Security Services act as the first point of contact and they are open 24 hours and will follow the University Notification Plan (See **Appendix 1: University Notification Plan**).
- 2 The University can be notified of a death in a number of ways. It is most common for a member of the deceased's family to contact a member of staff, or for news to reach students or staff via social media. It is important that death-related information is verified before any further action is taken. To ensure that this happens, and to ensure that the University's Student Death Protocol is enacted, any member of the University community who is made aware of a death or suspected death should contact University Security on 01494 605070
- 3 In the event of a medical emergency or you are in any way unsure if the person is deceased, telephone 999 for an ambulance and then University Security on 01494 605070.
- 4 In the event of a body being found, telephone 999 for the Police and then University Security Services on 01494 605070.

Background and context

- 5 The university operates as a collegiate community and the death of a student can have a large impact on fellow students and the staff who work with them. The University will not seek to replicate the support offered by statutory services but will use its best endeavours to provide help and guidance in an organised and effective manner.
- 6 The location in which the death occurs will have a significant influence on the degree to which members of the University are involved in the early stages of dealing with the discovery of the body and notifying the authorities. The location will probably be one of the following:
 - In one of the University college residences
 - In a Department building or other non-residential part of the University estate
 - Off campus whilst engaged in University activity
 - Off campus, whilst living in local accommodation away from their permanent or family residence.
 - Off campus in their permanent home or in a public place.
 - Whilst abroad, either on University placement or for vacation
- 7 If a body is discovered
 - **DO NOT** touch or move anything (other than to confirm that the person is deceased).
 - If the location is on campus: inform the University Security Centre on extension 5070 and ask them to call the police.
 - If the location is off-campus: inform the police and, separately, inform the University Security 01494 605070

- Where appropriate those present should secure the scene pending the arrival of the police; security staff will usually take the lead in this.
 - There may be other people at the scene and they need to be dealt with in a sensitive manner. Generally they should be asked to remain in the vicinity until the police arrive, preferably together in a suitable nearby room. Wherever possible immediate care and comfort should be provided by those on the scene and the names and contact details of those present should be recorded.
- 8 The degree to which members of the University become involved, in ways other than being supportive of those distressed, may be affected by the manner of death, which may fall into one of the following categories:
- Accidental
 - Possible suicide
 - Natural causes (with or without infectious disease implications)
 - Crime or suspected crime
 - Substance related

There are many operational decisions that need to be made that collectively can have a big impact on how the bereaved family feel that the University has managed the death.

- 9 The Director of Student Services will take responsibility for coordinating the University's response. They will expect to be kept updated by colleagues with matters as they progress so that they can continue to coordinate the work effectively. They will liaise with senior management as required, if decisions not ordinarily delegated to them need to be taken.
- 10 In these rare events, University staff will be expected to undertake additional duties that are related to their regular role, for example to update student records or to meet the family. The coordination role undertaken by staff from Student Services will not replace the role of staff from other professional services, faculties and schools which is vitally important in such circumstances. It may be appropriate that the coordinator acts wholly behind the scenes and support the staff who are liaising directly with the family of the deceased, for example, rather than taking on that liaison work themselves.
- 11 The death of a student and the work that happens subsequently can have impact on those involved. Do share your concerns with your line manager and make use of the support available to you. It is known that psychological debriefing immediately after a death is unlikely to be helpful. This contradicts what was previously thought where counsellors would be asked to provide immediate follow-up care. Instead, it is best to make the bereaved aware of what support is available and let them access that support when they are ready.

Ascertaining factual information about the death

- 12 The first task of the Director of Student Services (DSS) is to verify that a death has occurred and to be satisfied of the accuracy and source of this information. This may take some time depending on the circumstances but is a matter of priority. The DSS

will then inform, by email, the list of University staff who will have or who are likely to have particular responsibilities. (see **Notification of staff** below)

Notifying the next of kin

- 13 Depending on the circumstances, a Police Officer or another member of the emergency services will normally notify the next of kin of the death. This task may be assigned to the consulate or embassy if the next of kin is abroad. This task should not fall to the University.

Managing press enquiries

- 14 Depending on the circumstances of the death, there may be press interest. It is important that all press enquiries are handled by the University Communications Manager. If a member of staff is contacted by a journalist, please ask them to call the University Communications Office unless directed otherwise.

Notification of staff

- 15 The relevant individuals (see Staff areas of responsibility below) will be contacted by the Director of Student Services for the purposes listed below. There are principles that will be adhered to in this process. Information relayed will be factual and will ordinarily be restricted to material that has been agreed by the external notifying agency (for example the police, or overseas consulate) or the University Communications team. The aim will be to dispel rumours wherever possible and to avoid speculation where matters are still being investigated. The timing is important; if the police need time to inform the next of kin before colleagues at the University are told then this will be respected.
- 16 A holding message may be sent when it has become common knowledge that a student has died but is it not possible to formally confirm this. Such a message will confirm that the University has been made aware of a possible student death but will not identify the individual student concerned. The message will remind students and staff of the support available to them as well as confirming that further information will be made available in due course.
- 17 The notification will contain the following basic information:
 - Name of deceased
 - Student ID number
 - Programme and year of study
 - Basic facts about the death, as appropriate.
 - A hyperlink to a copy of this protocol held on the web and Blackboard, for reference, noting that staff must log in to access the document.
 - Name and contact details of the Director of Student Services who will act as the coordinator and the person all enquiries should be directed to.

- A request that no-one should contact the next of kin without consulting with the DSS
- Advice about how to notify students of what has happened is available from the DSS, and staff with responsibility are asked to contact the DSS before disseminating the news any further.
- A request that all press enquiries should be referred to the University Communications Office.

Staff areas of responsibility

Senior Management

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Vice-Chancellor	For information and University letter of condolence
Deputy Vice-Chancellor	For information
PVC Design, Media & Management	For information
PVC Learning & Teaching	For information
PVC Society & Health	For information

Student Services Directorate

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Director of Student Services	Overall responsibility for coordinating the University's response: see paragraphs 21ff.
Student Service Managers	Deputising for the Director of Student Services, as appropriate.
Student Centre Manager	For information, and for action in closing down the deceased students' record and if a tuition fee refund is due (in liaison with the Faculty Office) or if a student is a debtor.
Coordinating Chaplain (or nominee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the DSS • Provide pastoral support for next of kin, close contacts and other members of the University as required • Offer to and arrange if requested, a memorial service of a religious or non-religious manner
Counselling Service Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For information, and to update any local records if the deceased was a client of that service • Be prepared to support students affected by the death of the deceased (information on close contacts ordinarily supplied by the DSS)

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Disability Service Manager	For information and to update any local records if the deceased was a client of that service
Library Services Manager	To ensure the library database is updated so that reminder notices for loan items are not send, and to inform the BSO if the deceased had library books that should be returned.

Accommodation Service

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Accommodation Service Manager	<p>For information, particularly if the death occurred in a University residence and to carry out the following duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To notify the hall community of the death. • To support those most affected (e.g. close contacts) • To liaise with the DSS in order that the next of kin can collect their belongings of the deceased • To liaise with academic school of the deceased, the DSS and the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy regarding a memorial service • Consider who from the Accommodation Service staff could attend the funeral, in liaison with the DSS (if appropriate) • To manage an accommodation fee refund (if appropriate) • If the deceased lived in private accommodation, to provide tenancy-related advice to students who were fellow residents of the deceased

School / Faculty

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Executive Dean of Faculty	For information.
Head of School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For information, and noting that they may be expected to produce a condolence letter (working with the DSS so that it dovetails with the condolence letter from the Vice Chancellor) • To ensure that students in the school are informed. See paragraph 23 • Consider impact of affected students' academic performance, particularly that of close contacts • Amend any school records as appropriate. • Arrange for a tuition fee refund, as appropriate. • Consider who from the School staff might attend the funeral, in liaison with the DSS
Faculty Operations Manager (for Faculty concerned)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make necessary amendments to the student records • To work with the Senior Faculty Registrars ad AQD to consider whether a posthumous degree should be awarded.

Member of Staff	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider whether a condolence letter from the Course Team should be sent in addition to the one sent by the Vice Chancellor / Head of School (please consult with DSS before deciding).

Communications and Marketing

Member of Staff	Responsibility
University Communications Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forewarning in case of media interest Work with the VC & SSD on the University-wide communication Prepare and respond to press announcements Gather information and script the death announcement on the University Facebook Page Monitor social media interactions and advise on the appropriate message
Director of Academic Quality	<p>If a posthumous award is made, to manage the graduation process and ceremony, and to work with the DSS to ensure the family are involved in the event as they wish.</p>

Learning & Teaching Directorate

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Head of Careers and Employability	<p>To remove the deceased from the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey, from any database and any other local records.</p>

Human Resources Directorate

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Director of Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For information, considering any staff support needs. Where a death involves the preparation of a statement for the Police or Coroner, to provide relevant advice.
Health and Safety Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lead on any health and safety investigation following death or serious injury sustained on University premises or in relation to a University activity. Represent the University in any official investigations, if these prove necessary.

Recruitment and Admissions

Member of Staff	Responsibility
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Member of Staff	Responsibility
Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions	For information, and in case of the deceased being an applicant as well as a current student
International Student Manager	For information, and if the student was from outside the UK, to offer support to the DSS about customs and practices that may be useful in liaising with the next of kin etc.

Facilities, Services and Estates

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Director of Estates	In case of any impact to the University estate.
Director of Facilities & Services	In case of impact on Facilities and Services
Bellrock Contracts Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the event of a death on University premises, take tactical control of the situation including liaison with emergency services, notifying key personnel, managing evacuation, ensure site security etc. Reporting the incident to the Health and Safety Manager following death or serious injury sustained on University premises or in relation to a University activity.

Academic Quality Directorate

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Director of Academic Quality	For information.
Examination Officer	To remove the deceased from any forthcoming examination sittings; for information in case of posthumous award being made.
Graduation Co-ordinator	Make arrangements for a posthumous award and liaise with the family accordingly

Students' Union

Member of Staff	Responsibility
Students' Union Chief Executive	Overall management of the Students' Union response

Member of Staff	Responsibility
SU Student Engagement Co-ordinator Students' Union President and Sabbatical Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the clubs and societies and sports teams of which the deceased was a member are informed and their mailing lists are updated as required. A list of which clubs and societies they are a member of should be passed to the DSS • Liaise with the DSS about communicating the death (bearing in mind that there will be other notifications being sent from school(s), halls, etc.) • Take necessary follow-up action if death occurred during Students' Union organised trip or activity (liaising with the Health and Safety Manager) • Liaise with SU communications team to ensure that appropriate reporting of the death appears in the student newspaper. • Email all Students' Union staff and sabbatical officers to ensure all media enquiries are referred to the University Communications Office.

Informing students: who and how

- 18 The notification to students is most likely to be sent by a school (course leader) to an identified cohort, to halls residents by the Accommodation Service Manager and Senior Residents, but also to smaller groups of close contacts identified by the DSS
- 19 Identify groups who are likely to be affected. Consider the structure of the programme and school. For example, is a year group appropriate or should all students on THE programme across multiple years be contacted, e.g. on professional programmes where cross-year groups are taught together.
- 20 The message should be short, factual, avoid speculation and aim to allay concerns wherever possible. The sources of support available to students should be clearly stated. These include the student Counselling Service, Multi-Faith Chaplaincy, Students' Union Advice Centre and Accommodation Service Manager.

Duties of the Director of Student Services

- 21 Liaison with the next of kin:
 - Retrieve the current address and next of kin details from the student record.
 - Identify if the deceased had any siblings at the University
 - Ensure the next of kin has the contact details for the DSS at the University
 - Make appropriate arrangements if the next of kin wishes to visit the University. This may involve offering to identify suitable local hotels/guest houses or guest rooms in halls of residence if they are not familiar with the town
 - In conjunction with the Accommodation Service Manager, make appropriate arrangements for collection of the deceased's belongings
- 22 Letters of condolence:

- In liaison with the University Communication Office, draft a letter of condolence of behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, including the name and contact details of the DSS for the family to contact should they wish to
 - Work with the Head of School on their condolence letter to ensure that it dovetails with the condolence letter from the Vice-Chancellor
- 23 Identification of close contacts (friends, colleagues etc.) and actions following:
- Identify close contacts by checking with the school, house/flatmates, Students' Union, sports clubs and societies as appropriate. It is likely to be very difficult if not impossible to identify everyone who is likely to be affected
 - Consider how these contacts should be informed of the death. Having a member of staff meet them as a group might be appropriate for housemates, but the information may spread quickly via friends and this should be borne in mind
 - Ensure that the Head of School for each of the close contacts is aware of the death and that the close contact may be affected in terms of their academic work, attendance and manner
 - Pass the names to the Counselling Service Manager and the Multi-Faith Co-ordinating Chaplain so that they can gain a more immediate appointment
- 24 Liaison with statutory services:
- Identify who is already involved and who is likely to be involved, including the Police, ambulance service, hospital, Coroner, consulate / embassy etc.
 - Contact the relevant statutory services to offer to act as the point of contact on behalf of the University
- 25 Funeral arrangements:
- Liaise with the next of kin about funeral arrangements
 - If appropriate, coordinate transport
 - Liaise with the Head of School and Accommodation Service Manager (as appropriate) to identify a suitable individual to represent the University at a funeral
 - Communicate the funeral details to the close contacts, academic school, halls etc.
 - In the unlikely event of there being no next of kin (or representative of the next of kin) in the UK who can take the lead on making necessary arrangements, ensure wishes regarding treatment of the body are ascertained and repatriation, financial and funeral arrangements are satisfactory.
- 26 Instigate memorial arrangements:
- To pass on suitable contacts in the school, halls, social groups etc. to the Coordinating Multi-Faith Chaplain who will take lead on offering to arrange a suitable memorial service.
- 27 Create a student death record as part of the deceased student record:
- To create a student death record, recording the key facts and location of any documents including condolence letters and other communication in a secure folder.

Appendix 1: University Notification Plan

Incident Notification and Communication

24 Hours Contact Number:

- **External: 01494 605070**
- **Internal Extension: 5070**

This note provides guidance and instruction for reporting of incidents and emergencies at Bucks New University. It must be followed in order to be effective; as the consequences of failure to respond effectively to any incident may be serious and extremely damaging not only to individuals, but also to the University and its wider reputation.

Identifying Incidents

Although there are many types of incident that may take place, for the purposes of planning and response, these have been broken down into the following main areas for responsibility and action:-

- 1) Death/Injury/Serious Illness
 - a. Student
 - b. Employee
 - c. Visitor
- 2) Security incident (assault/criminal activity/theft or robbery)
 - a. Student
 - b. Employee
 - c. Visitor
- 3) Emergency. An external or internal incident that is either accidental or malicious and has a potential to cause significant damage to infrastructure and stakeholders.
- 4) Police. An incident or other notification from the police or other agency which requires an immediate response from the University.
- 5) Reputational. Many incidents will have reputational implications; particularly if they are human stories or news sensitive/topical.
- 6) Facilities / Services / Operations. The requirement to maintain the University infrastructure and associated services incorporates many areas within the organisation and will require specialist and specialised co-ordination and response.

Unless the incident is part of routine activity (for example a minor water leak when Estates and maintenance teams are available), without exception and regardless of the source of information concerning any incident, and the time of day or night, you should inform the University security desk on 01494 605070/Ext 5070. If life or safety is at risk call 999 first.

University Security will then contact the relevant university personnel. You should not contact any other University personnel directly.

A pocket size contact card is issued to all employees and students that provides straightforward and simple contact details and guidance in the event of an incident that may require University response.

Staff, Students and the Media

In the event members of the media approach members of staff or students, they should direct the media to speak directly with the University Communications role holder, contactable via the Security office on **01494 605070 / Ext 5070**.

*If approached by the media the response should be polite but firm, explaining they are unable to provide a comment or answer questions and direct the enquirer to University Communications. Members of staff **should not** answer any media questions with “no comment”.*

While it is tempting to message and post your comments and images to others, please do not start or escalate rumours and discussions on social media. Incidents may involve casualties and relatives need to be informed before details are made public or circulated to the external media.

Remember!

In the event of *any* incident that lies within the scope of this document, your point of contact is University Security.

From an outside number - 01494 605070 - Internal Extension - 5070