

Student Death Procedure 4.0	
Enabling Policy Statement; Executive Owner; Approval Route:	Our Students - Chief Student Officer - Executive Board
Is the Procedure for internal use only (Non- disclosable) ?	Disclosable
Associated Policy Statements:	Our Safety – Chief Operating Officer
Authorised Owner:	Director of Student Life
Authorised Co-ordinator:	Director of Student Life
Effective date:	April 2024
Due date for full review:	April 2027
Sub documentation:	N/A

Approval History

Version	Reason for review	Approval Route	Date
1	Policy created	Executive Board	April 2014
2	Formal update	Executive Board	Jan 2020
3	Brief amendments	Lucy Evans	April 2021
4	Transfer to POPP and update	Executive Board	April 2024

1. Purpose

It is rare that the University is faced with the death of a current student. It is essential that formal procedures are in place which observe the following principles:

- 1.1. an appropriate and timely response from the University, with help as appropriate from relevant external agencies.
- 1.2. a sensitive and compassionate approach which recognises the distress for the person finding the body and the distress or potential for distress for staff and students close to the deceased student.
- 1.3. Provides advice and guidance around communication with the next of kin.
- 1.4. Provides a plan of actions and allocates clear lines of responsibility to support a set of coherent and valuable contributions in response to the death made by University staff and students;
- 1.5. the observation of legalities to protect the interests of the University in cases where negligence might be alleged.

2. Scope and Exceptions to the Procedure

2.1. The procedure provides a high-level overview of the responsibilities and actions required by a range of stakeholders to respond to all student deaths. Roles and responsibilities are undertaken by the following upon notification of a student death;

- Silver Commander.
- Chief Student Officer (CSO).
- Director of Student Life.
- Head of Wellbeing and Welfare.
- Head of Communications or duty comms.
- Head of Campus Safety (if appropriate).
- VCs office.
- University Secretary and Legal Counsel.
- Exec Dean for the relevant faculty.
- DOFO Director of Faculty Operations.
- Personal tutor/academic staff/Senior Personal Tutor
- Academic Registrar.
- Pres of SU (if appropriate).
- Head of Student Experience
- Health and Safety (if appropriate).
- Head of Accommodation (if appropriate).
- Wellbeing on-call.
- OSCAR (if appropriate).
- Director of HR (if appropriate).
- Head of Employability (if appropriate).

2.2. This procedure applies to all deaths of enrolled students and the response will be proportionate to the specific situation. At all times, the care of those impacted by the death will be at the forefront of the processes.

In the case of deaths of alumni, the Chief Student Officer and the Vice-President (Global) should be informed in the first instance and will make a decision about the proportionality of the response, they will take advice from relevant colleagues across the University (as outlined above) to inform their decision and respond appropriately.

In the case of the death of a current student, the Chief Student Officer should be notified immediately or in their absence, the Director of Student Life, and necessary actions taken as per action log (Appendix 1) a death of a student in University controlled premises will require a different response to a death off site or in hospital.

For deaths from a suspected suicide, the University UK guidance '[How to Respond to a Student Suicide](#)' will be the guiding documents, however significant overlap from a death of any nature will follow the principles outlined in the documents.

There are no exceptions to this procedure.

3. Definitions and Terminology

3.1. **Postvention:** is an organised response that provides timely and appropriate support for those affected by a death and includes;

- Supporting the grieving and adjustment process and helping those affected by the death to process the immediate and longer-term trauma and grief.
- Addressing the immediate crisis to stabilize the situation, limiting the potential risk of further suicides and imitative suicidal behavior, if this appears to be the cause of death.
- Assisting the community to start recovering from the initial intense trauma and gradually returning to normality.
- Reviewing and sharing learning from the death and postvention efforts to improve future prevention and postvention response efforts.

3.2. **Phases:**

Phase 1: Initial incident response: The period immediately after identification of a body, during an active incident or immediately after a student or a member of staff has been informed of a student death. An initial response will include preservation of a scene if there is one, notification to emergency services, support to those present at the scene and recording of the incident. This is the point during which the Silver Command is established and frequent meetings occur to direct a coordinated University Response.

Phase 2: Period of response following Phase 1 when responsibility is transferred to the Chief Student Officer (or designate) during which departmental teams offer immediate aftercare to help those affected under the direction of an Incident Response Manager (IRM), a Family Contact Officer (FCO) and a Students Contact Officer (SCO).

Phase 3: Period of longer-term response and support, following Phase 2, usually after the funeral incorporating feedback and review.

3.3. **Postvention team:**

A small team of relevant staff with pre-agreed roles in responding to an assumed suicide recommended by [University UK](#) to take on responsibility for supporting and communicating with all affected students, staff and Next of Kin

3.4. **Post incident review:**

A procedure which is used whenever a serious incident occurs and is intended to support learning to minimize the chance of a recurrence of a similar incidence involving another student. [The review](#) aims to analyse what happened, to whom, when and where, to identify any learnings or reflections that can be drawn from what has happened and develops a clear action plan and owners for improvement including how any learning will be implemented.

4. Procedural Principles

4.1. Roles and responsibilities are undertaken by the following upon notification of a student death; All information, templates and documentation are stored in the teams site; [Student Death Template Site](#).

- **Silver Commander:** a rota of senior University Managers, Silver command is the middle tier of the University major incident response team (Gold, Silver, Bronze). The Silver Commander takes a tactical approach to incident management, specifically to formulate tactical plans to achieve threat specific and consequence management plans and approving communications.
- **Incident Response Manager (IRM):** The operational manager leading the overall coordination of the operation response to a student death. Usually, the IRM will be;
 - i. Chief Student Officer,
 - ii. Director of Student Life
 - iii. Head of Wellbeing and Welfare
- **Family Contact Officer (FCO):** The individual appointed to act as the sole liaison point from the University with the family following a sudden death. Normally, the FCO will be;
 - i. Head of Wellbeing and Welfare
 - ii. University representative of the relevant faith.
- **Care for Student Lead:** The appointed staff member who acts as coordinator and identified as the 'go to' person for closely affected students. Normally, the care for student lead will be the;
 - i. Student Administration Manager
 - ii. Senior Personal Tutor
 - iii. Personal Tutor
 - iv. Other academic lead in the relevant Faculty,If the death has occurred on placement, this role may be undertaken by the Associate Director of Student Experience
- **Care for Staff Lead:** The appointed staff member who acts as coordinator and identified as the 'go to' person for closely affected staff. Normally, the care for staff lead will be the;
 - i. Faculty HR Business Partner
 - ii. Head of Department
 - iii. Department Officer Faculty if more appropriate.
- **Communications Lead:** Advice and guidance on communications, following an appropriate approach and plan guided by communication principles, they will support collateral creation and providing media support if required.
 - i. The Director of Communications
 - ii. The Head of External Relations
 - iii. Duty Comms Officer.
- **Police link:** The contact for the Police throughout the management of the incident. This is independent of the Silver Command structure.
 - i. Head of Campus Safety or
 - ii. Deputy Head of Campus Safety
- **Note taker/Administrator:** to make timely and accurate notes from the meetings and run the Teams site for the incident: CSO Executive Assistant/Centre Manager for Wellbeing and Welfare.

Phase 1

4.2 Action on discovery of the death of a student on University owned property:

Any student or member of staff who discovers a body should;

4.2.1 Immediately notify Campus Safety and ask for an Ambulance by telephoning 01483 683333 or 999 and alert Campus Safety after the 999 call. Provide CPR if trained to do so.

4.2.2 Do not touch or move the body or any object connected with the scene.

4.2.3 Campus Safety will then immediately notify the Head of Campus Safety (or nominee)

4.2.4 Head of Campus Safety will notify the following:

- Chair of Silver Command
- Chief Student Officer
- Head of Wellbeing and Welfare
- Director of Communications, Head of External Relations or Duty Communications Officer

4.2.5 Campus Safety will ensure that if there are witnesses who the Police will wish to interview, they are taken to a private area removed from the immediate scene as soon as possible and provided with appropriate support (e.g. crisis support)

4.2.6 Campus Safety will start an incident log.

4.3 Action on discovery of the death of a student off campus:

Any student or member of staff who is notified of a student death off University property should;

4.3.1 Immediately notify Campus Safety by telephoning 01483 683333, control will then immediately notify the Head of Campus Safety (or designate).

4.3.2 Campus Safety will start an incident log.

4.3.3 The Head of Campus Safety (or designate) will immediately notify all of the individuals listed below;

- Chair of Silver Command
- Chief Student Officer
- Head of Wellbeing and Welfare
- Director of Communications, Head of External Relations or Duty Communications Officer
-

4.4 Action on notification of a recent student death:

Chief Student Officer is informed and notifies all of the individuals listed below;

- Head of Wellbeing and Welfare
- Director of Communications, Head of External Relations or Duty Communications officer
- Head of Department

Phase 2

4.5 Silver Command meeting

For all above scenarios, a Silver Command meeting or Incident response meeting will be called to coordinate initial responses and communications. The timing of the meeting will depend on the circumstances and will be framed according to the assumed cause of death (if known).

4.5.1 Silver Command will be established by the Silver Commander on rota at that time and will coordinate initial responses and communications.

4.5.2 The Chair of Silver Command will ensure a record is taken of actions agreed by Silver Command using the action plan template document (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

4.5.3 Silver Commander will immediately appoint an Incident Response Manager (likely to be the Chief Student Officer or Director of Student Life) and call a Silver Command meeting in the most suitable time frame, this meeting is likely to include;

- Chief Student Officer.
- Director of Student Life.
- Head of Wellbeing and Welfare.
- Silver Commander.
- Director of Communications, Head of External Relations or Duty Communications Officer.
- Head of Campus Safety (if appropriate.)
- Exec Dean for the relevant faculty.
- Director of Faculty Operations.
- Health and Safety (if appropriate).
- Head of Employability (if appropriate).
- Note taker.

4.5.4 Incident Response Manager (IRM) will notify the following:

- VC office
- Secretariat (and they will notify Insurance)
- Student's Union President and CEO
- Other colleagues within the Wellbeing and Welfare teams, Student Experience teams as appropriate.
- Academic registrar - who will inform:
 - Student Records and Data: this team updates SITS and Student Finance England
 - UKVI: if the student is international
 - Programme Administration team: they update local records and inform the department.
 - Timetabling: updates CMIS
 - Fees and Funding: update fee records

4.6 Post-vention Group

In the case of suspected suicide, the IRM will set up post-vention group to include the following staff

- Incident Response Manager
- Communications Lead
- Faculty Contact
- Family Contact Officer (or FLO)
- Care for Students Lead
- Care for Staff Lead
- Head of Campus Safety

4.6.1 The Family Contact Officer will use the following guide to have initial and follow up conversations with the family/next of kin only once we are aware that the Police have informed the NOK or if we are certain they are aware.

- Expressing condolences on behalf of the Vice-chancellor and the wider community (and send a letter from the Vice-chancellor in due course). This should be based on a template, but with appropriate personalisation.
- Informing them that you are a senior member of the higher education institution who will act as the sole family liaison officer.

- Sensitively exploring immediate familial relationships (eg confirming names of the parents and any siblings, whether parents are separated etc).
- Learning anything further about the circumstances of the student's death or the background from the family's perspective.
- Supporting direct contact with other students who knew the deceased.
- Considering a posthumous award and attendance at a future graduation ceremony.
- Providing information about local undertaker/reparation services.
- Sensitively supporting with the packing and return of belongings but never give a sense that the room is required back.
- Supporting with releasing the family from the student's accommodation contract (this is automatic in higher education institution accommodation) but ensure all payment requests are immediately froze.
- Considering a refund of tuition and accommodation fees.
- Supporting with notifying funding bodies or relevant organisations (eg Student Finance England (SFE) and Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)).
- Actions Considerations/resources Completed/notes
- Sharing an initial factual view of the circumstances and background to the student's death from the higher education institution's perspective.
- Explaining the higher education institution's relationship to the Police/Coroner's team and outline any information provided to them.
- Summarising the key actions that have been taken in response to the news about the student's death.
- Discussing the approach to communicating with fellow students.
- Exploring whether the family are aware of any close friends of the deceased, who are members of the higher education institution who may require support.
- Exploring if the family are religious or have any spiritual requirements – link to relevant chaplain is appropriate.
- Offering short term accommodation for family members if required.
- Offering advice and support with handling media enquiries (where applicable).
- Answering as fully and openly as possible any immediate questions about the student's time at the higher education institution.
- Seeking to understand (and provide an initial response where possible) to any immediate concerns raised by the family.
- Providing a follow up email summarising the initial actions that have been agreed, provision of full contact details and a reiteration of the offer to make contact as and when further assistance might be required.
- Providing details of any local or national support services.
- Providing any requested copies of work produced by the student and an academic transcript.
- Supporting direct contact or reflections from higher education institution staff who knew the student particularly well

4.6.2 The post-vention team will follow the [University UK guidance](#) on the responsibilities and agenda, they will meet regularly post incident once silver command has handed over the incident to the post-vention chair (usually the IRM). The chair will ensure that the actions are documented on the action log (appendix 2, 3) and the reach out plan (appendix 3).

The reach out plan (appendix 3) identifies the key people connected to the student, it is important for the Post-vention team to create this template to ensure that all contacts are considered. Details are taken from the [Headspace guidance](#) to reduce suicide contagion, however the principles apply to all deaths to ensure that students and staff are best supported after the news of a death.

4.7 Communications

The Communication principles which will be followed during the response to a student death will follow the basic considerations from the [University UK guidance](#) ;

- Ensure that the wishes of the family are respected at all times.
- Any communications that are required should be timely in order to support the wellbeing of any students or staff who may be affected by the news. Communications will usually take place at a school or department level, with additional bespoke communications dependent on advice from the IRM, FLO and SCO on close contacts or others who may be affected.
- Give due consideration as to whether any wider communications might be necessary – for example to allay any fears in our wider community or in the event that there is a reason the student's death is attracting wider attention – and ensure the appropriateness of any communications channels to be used for this purpose.
- Consider whether liaison with any external agencies is necessary to ensure co-ordination of communications – e.g. Surrey Police media relations team – and lead on this liaison where required.
- Ensure any media enquiries relating to the matter are handled centrally in a way that respects the wishes of the family and protects the wellbeing of our community.
- Ensure the appropriate spokesperson is identified for any audiences we are communicating with.
- The communications team can consider contacting the Samaritans for advice or consult [research](#) to help frame communications to reduce clusters if the death is related to suicide.

4.8 Follow up Silver command meetings if required documenting in appendix 2,3 and 4 as appropriate.

Phase 3

Period of longer-term response and support, following Phase 2, usually after the funeral incorporating feedback and review.

4.9 **Book of condolence;** this is arranged via the Head of Department or Director of Faculty Operations and with the support of the communications team, the option of an online or physical book is available, purchasing this will be made via the faculty. The book of condolence can be made available in a room in the department and notified through communications sent from the Head of Department. It could be considered that support via the chaplains is made available in the book of condolence room, discussion with the Coordinating Chaplain or faith representative will be important to ensure appropriate in person support. The book of condolence will be presented to the family in person or online around the time of the funeral. Online book of condolence [Memorial website and online condolences | Remembr.](#)

4.10 **Funeral arrangements;** these are initially discussed by the FCO with the family or friends and authorisation by the family is provided and cascaded to the department as appropriate, the family's wishes are paramount, but the intent is for attendance by a representative of the department and wider University staff if appropriate. Staff, peers and other colleagues will be notified of the family's wishes via email, including preferences of donations, flowers, date and time and venue etc. Flowers or donations can be paid for by the department.

4.11 **Memorials;** the Coordinating Chaplain or faith representative can arrange for memorials to be undertaken in line with family's and friends wishes, details are outlined on the [Tree of Life pages](#). It is important to consider, in the event of a suicide, that memorials are discussed with the Head of Wellbeing to reduce the risk of clusters.

- 4.12 **Ongoing contact with Family/NOK:** it is likely that the FLO will maintain appropriate contact with the Family and after the death of a student, however, a faith representative, member of the department or other may be more appropriate, the wishes of the family are paramount. It is best practice for the Vice Chancellor to send out a letter on the 1st year anniversary of the death.
- 4.13 **Coroner link;** would normally be the Secretariate, they will maintain the link and organize any documentation as appropriate for the coroner.
- 4.14 **Post incident review;** all suspected suicides will be subject to a full review, this may be in parallel to the legal team's own investigations and reports but will form the basis of the initial response, this will be led by the postvention team and follow the guidance of the [University UK suicide review guidance](#).
- 4.15 **Posthumous degree:** The Head of School/Department will consider if the student is able to receive a posthumous degree, the [Procedure for Awarding Aegrotat and Posthumous Degrees](#) outlines the process for approval and award. Initial conversations with the family will be had with the FLO and/or Head of school/Department.

Documentation templates are in Appendix 4 for updates and additional information.

5 Governance Requirements

5.1 Implementation: Communication Plan

- SurreyNet launch
- A Leader's Alert
- Campus Safety Team, Leader Meeting
- Email communication to all stakeholders outlined in section 2.1
- Email communication to all postvention team as identified in 4.3

5.2 Implementation: Training Plan

Training is limited to those staff who are directly involved in the immediate incidents and for the postvention team.

- **Campus Safety:** As first responders, Campus Safety should ensure they are up to date with First Aid at Work, Basic Life Support and other lifesaving training as per schedule set by Health and Safety. Annual refresher training on Meningitis awareness.
- **Postvention team:** Annual meeting to review documentation and ensure each standing member understands their role and responsibility.
- **Mental Health Practitioner teams:** Annual review of procedure and ensure training specific to role has been completed.

5.3 Review

This procedure will be reviewed every 3 years unless relevant legislation comes into effect before the 3-year review is due.

5.4 Legislative Context and Higher Education Sector Guidance or Requirements

[Health & Safety at Work Act 1974](#)
[Occupiers Liability / Defective Premises Act](#)
[Counter Terrorism and Campus Safety Act 2015 \(Prevent Duty\)](#)
[Suicide Safer Universities](#)
[UUK Suicide safer guidance for practitioners](#)
[Meningitis Now](#)

5.5 Sustainability

There is no environmental impact of this procedure.

6 Stakeholder Engagement and Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 The Equality Impact Assessment has been completed 16/2/24 is held by the Authorised Co-Ordinator.

6.2 Stakeholder Consultation was completed, as follows:

Stakeholder	Nature of Engagement	Request EB Approval (Y/N)	Date	Name of Contact
Governance	Consultation		11/04/24	Kelley Padley
H&S	Consultation		8/12/23	Matt Purcell
Sustainability	Consultation			
Head of Campus Safety	Consultation		8/12/23	Mark Chatterton
Director of Student Life	Consultation		8/12/23	Emma Rowsell
Head of External Relations	Consultation		8/12/23	Robert Blevin
Interim Joint Academic Registrar	Consultation		8/12/23	Camilla Davis
Interim Joint Academic Registrar	Consultation		8/12/23	Glenn Moulton
Senior Mental Health Practitioner	Consultation		8/12/23	Lisa Hawthorne
Chief Student Officer	Consultation and approval			Kerry Matthews
Suicide Safety Group	Consultation		8/12/23	Hugo Metcalf Mark Chatterton Matt Purcell Katie Hay Liam White Jennifer Oates Jodie Hansford Kate Bailey Zoe

				Carruthers
UEC	Approved	Y	19/3/24	Kerry Matthews

Appendix 1.

**Action Log
Postvention Template**

Name of Student/Staff:

Date:

URN/Staff number:

Phase 1

Initial Incident Response

Initial period of response during which the Silver Command is established and frequent meetings occur to direct a co-ordinated University response

Taking the call	Details	Update
If you receive a call from Campus Safety/ other source informing of a sudden student/staff death, ask:		
Time/date/location of incident		
Is the incident still active and ongoing?		
Have the emergency services been called?		
Name, date of birth and if possible, course, and student/staff number of the people involved		
How the caller became aware of the incident		
Take the caller's name, position, and take their contact details and any other relevant contact numbers		
If any staff members involved or aware of the incident?		
Circumstances/further details		

N.B If the call is not from Campus Safety, call them to let them know about the death.

Collating information	Details	Updates
Access SITS or ask student records and accommodation to provide the following		

Name, course, year, and student/student number of the people involved		
Addresses of the student(s) involved (accommodation)		
Details of the students they live with (accommodation)		
Information on the student's previous contact with Student Services via Head of Wellbeing and Welfare and Head of Student Experience or of HR/management contact		
Next of kin details		
Any other relevant information		

Additional information

Appendix 2

Action Log

Phase 2

Period of response following Phase 1 when responsibility is transferred to the Chief Student Officer (or designate) during which departmental teams offer immediate aftercare to help those affected under the direction of an Incident Response Manager (IRM), a Family Contact Officer (FCO) and a Students Contact Officer (SCO).

Notifications	y/n	Details
Chief Student Officer		
Director of Student Life		
Head of Wellbeing (request if known to services)		
Silver Commander		
Head of Communications or duty comms		
Head of Campus Safety (if approp.)		
VCs office		
University Secretary and Legal Counsel		
Exec Dean for the relevant faculty		
DOFO-Director of Faculty Operations		
Academic Registrar		
Pres of SU and CEO		
Head of Student Experience (ensure teams can support financial, visa issues)		
Health and Safety (if approp)		
Head of Accommodation (if approp)		
Wellbeing on-call		
OSCAR (if approp)		
Director of HR (if approp)		
Head of Employability (if approp)		

Postvention team (PVT)

Roles	Name	Postvention team formed of team members
Silver commander		
Incident Response Manager		
Communications Lead		
Faculty Contact		
Family Contact Officer (or FLO)		
Care for Students Lead		
Care for Staff Lead		
Head of Campus Safety		
Note taker/Administrator		

Identify contacts use Appendix 1 and refer to Reach out protocols in Appendix 3;

Student contacts	y/n
In accommodation	

On course	
In clubs/societies	
Who saw incident	
Friends	
Those in relationship	
Social media contacts	
In paid employment	
Staff contacts	
Personal tutor	
Head of Department (HOD)(to cascade information to all involved staff in a sensitive manner) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic staff • Teaching staff • Senior operations staff • Student support and assessments 	
Placement provider	
HR	

NB if contacts are known to be at other Universities and are close contacts (such as boyfriend), contact other institution if known to request support is given.

Information cascade record (what information to be cascaded by whom and to whom)

Appendix 3 Reach-out Plan – Blank Template

Geographical Proximity (Individual/Groups)	Initial Reach Out	Person/s Responsible	Due By	Date Completed	
Psychological Proximity (Individual/Groups)					
Social Proximity (Individual/Groups)					

Appendix 4.

Updates	Additional information	Actions
Date:		
Circumstances (inc police updates)		
FCO		
Student contacts		
Staff contacts		
Communications		
Support (internal offering and external)		

Action Log

Date	Action	Owner	Update date	Update