



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



# Student Death Protocol

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## Initial notification overview

- 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 Success will take responsibility for coordinating the University's response (Appendix 2). They will expect to be kept updated by colleagues as matters 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 DfSS 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 supports 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 Director of Student Success (DSS) should first 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 and/or phone, 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.

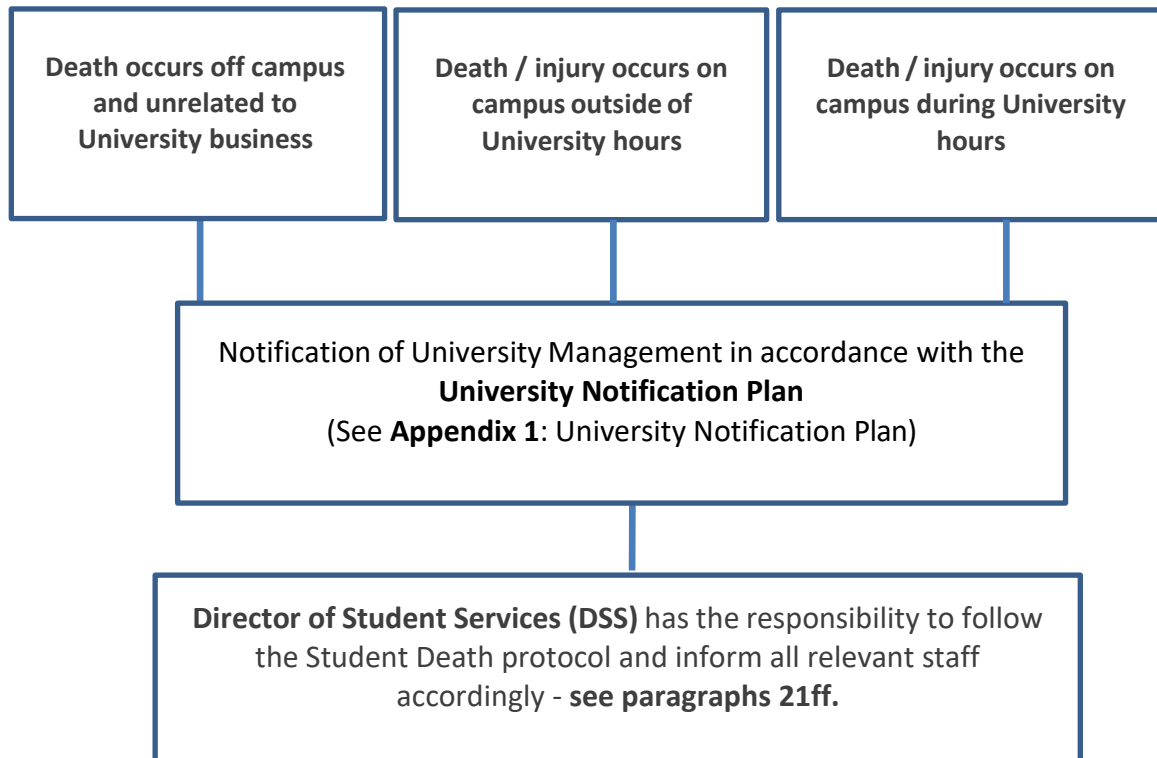
## Managing press enquiries

- 14 Depending on the circumstances of the death, there may be press interest. It is important that all press enquiries are handled by the Director of VCC&CE. 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 and students

- 15 The relevant individuals (see Appendix 2 - University Response below) will be contacted by the Director of Student Success 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 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 All communications will be managed by the Director of VCC&CE in accordance with the pre-prepared messaging approved for such circumstances (see Appendix 3). All communications will be tailored to the audience and the information that is legitimate to share at that time.

## Notification Flowchart



# 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 Buckinghamshire 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.

### Appendix 4: Summary flowchart of immediate actions

Unexpected death -  
Immediate Action  
Refer to UUK  
postvention  
guidance checklist  
for full actions

