Guidance for Staff Responding to a Student Death

Note - Any reference in this guidance to named officers should also be read as a reference in each case to a delegated nominee.

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Introduction

The death of a student is always a sensitive matter and represents a tragedy for all those affected. It is, in most cases, an unexpected event. In such circumstances it is important to ensure certain steps are taken to notify relevant people and to gather information while being aware of the need to show sensitivity and compassion to those affected by the death.

The notification of the death of a student may come to the University from any source and to any point. After the initial notification and confirmation, the majority of actions will be taken by the Directorate for the Student Experience (DSE) in liaison with, and supported by, other parts of the University as appropriate. A senior member of the DSE will act as the lead coordinator in the event of a student death. This will either be the Executive Director for the Student Experience, the Director of Campus Life, or the Director of Residential & Sport Services.

The response in any particular case will need to be dealt with flexibly and as appropriate on the individual circumstances.

Any contact from the press or other media should be directed, without comment, to the Media Relations Team within the Directorate of Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment. Staff in that office will prepare a statement for the press, if required, and will handle external enquiries.

It is not intended that this guidance be used in circumstances where the death is of a former student. However, if the student had only recently left the University it might be appropriate to follow the spirit, if not the letter, of this guidance.

Note:

i. This document is concerned with steps to be taken on receiving news that a student has died. If someone discovers an apparent death on campus, the first contact should be to the Police (9999 from an internal university telephone) and the University Security Service (0161 306 9966 – this telephone number is displayed on the back of your staff card).

ii. It is the role of the police or hospital to inform the next of kin of the death. **No contact should be made with the next of kin/emergency contact until it is known definitely that they have been informed.** (The DSE lead coordinator will act on exceptions where necessary).

iii. The Executive Director for the Student Experience is the University's senior officer with responsibility for liaison with HM Coroner. Any enquiries from the Coroner or from the Police relating to the death of a student should therefore be referred to the Executive Director for the Student Experience. Where a student is discovered to have died on campus, including in a hall of residence, the Executive Director for the Student Experience (or their nominee) must be called immediately and asked to attend the scene.

iv. In circumstances where the death is being treated as a suspected suicide then a detailed Postvention Checklist will be used to further guide the University's response. This will be led by the Executive Director for the Student Experience (or their nominee) https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=62027.

v. It is important not to speculate about the cause of death and to treat information about the circumstances of the death as confidential. This is particularly important as some families do not wish for details to be shared with anyone. In the event of there being concerns on the part of fellow students or staff about the cause of death, it is not standard practice for the results of a post-mortem examination to be made public (as this information is confidential to the next of kin) but any deaths that give rise to a public health concern will be handled swiftly by UK Health Security Agency.

One: Verification

- **No action shall be taken until the DSE lead coordinator has confirmed that the news is correct and next of kin has been informed.**
- The DSE lead coordinator will decide what additional steps, if any, are needed to confirm the news, bearing in mind that acting on incorrect news is likely ultimately to be more distressing to family, next of kin and members of the University than sensitive contact.
- Once the information has been confirmed, the DSE lead coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the necessary response is made.
- The DSE lead coordinator, in liaison with the Director of School Operations, will identify a named coordinator within the School. This individual will be responsible for having oversight of the School-based actions, subsequent to verification of the death and will be of an appropriate level of seniority.
- The DSE lead coordinator will liaise with the Police, Coroner's Office, Health, and other authorities, as necessary.
- The DSE lead coordinator will liaise with the Media Relations Team within the Directorate of Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment in the event that there is likely to be heightened media interest in the news or comments on social media.
- On receipt of notification from the Director of Campus Life, the President's Office will send a letter of condolence on behalf of the University. Schools may give consideration to additional forms of condolence or tribute and should consult with the DSE lead coordinator for support.
- In respect of ongoing communication and actions, the overarching objective is to be sensitive to the needs and wishes of the family/next of kin, reducing the number of separate contacts they have within the University and avoiding unnecessary distress.

Two: Immediate Actions and Considerations

The DSE lead coordinator will:

- Contact the student's next of kin/emergency contact and establish themselves as the main point of contact at the University, offering practical support as far as reasonably possible.
- With the Director of School Operations, identify an individual to be the named School coordinator. This individual will be responsible for having oversight of the School-based actions, subsequent to verification of the death and will be of an appropriate level of seniority.
- Continue to act as the point of contact for any ongoing liaison with the Police, Coroner's Office, Health and other authorities, as necessary.
- Continue to act as the primary point of contact for the family of the deceased student.
- Liaise, as appropriate, with other colleagues across the University to ensure there is a coordinated response in, for example, arranging for return/collection of a student's personal belongings, arranging for the family to visit the University, refund of any tuition and accommodation fees.
- Liaise with the Head of Counselling and Mental Health to give due consideration to the support needs of members of the University community who may be impacted by the death, as detailed in Appendix 4. This may include those present at the death, members of the University Campus Support and Security team, teaching and student support staff and friends or housemates of the deceased. These individuals and social groups may not be immediately apparent and efforts should be made to identify others who may have been impacted. The Head of Advice and Response will support these efforts.
- Liaise with the Head of Advice and Response to coordinate any practical support needed by those impacted by the death – e.g. financial impact, accommodation issues, support with submitting mitigation.
- Assess whether the student or family are people of faith or connected to a faith community and liaise with the relevant chaplain to ensure faith support is provided as appropriate.
- Liaise with the DSE Student Experience Officer to ensure that the deceased student's address, contact and emergency contact details are saved centrally ahead of the School updating the student record.
- In liaison with the School coordinator, make information available to students and staff who wish to attend the funeral (if the family has requested this and in accordance with their wishes).
- Ensure an appropriate tribute at the funeral in accordance with the family's wishes (expenditure on wreaths or similar tributes to mark the death of a student may be made from University funds but the expenditure must conform with the relevant Financial Regulations and Procedures).
- If it is the family's wishes, and it is practical to do so, it would be appropriate for a member of staff to formally represent either the School and/or the University at the funeral. There is no set protocol as to who that should be in terms of position held in the School but should ideally be a member of staff who knew the student personally.

Throughout the above and thereafter

- Keep the School coordinator informed of any developments or emerging issues. Liaise with the Directorate of Legal Affairs and Board Secretariat in respect of any legal representation or correspondence with HM Coroner.

The Director of Campus Life will:

- Notify individuals named in Appendix 3 'Recipients of Notification of a Student Death' and be responsible for confirming that the actions stated have been taken and any queries resolved.
- The notification will include details of the DSE lead coordinator and the named School coordinator, who will be the key points of contact for other University offices and external agencies, together with pertinent information about the student.

The named School Coordinator will:

- Decide, in consultation with appropriate staff, which students in the School need to be informed of the death and make arrangements for doing so, but only once the DSE lead coordinator has confirmed that the news can be shared. (Note: the news may come as a great shock to fellow students and consideration must be given to providing support and/or information about how to access support services, including the Counselling and Mental Health Service, as detailed in Appendix 4.)
- Inform the relevant Head of Division, Programme Director, Academic Adviser and other key staff in the School. In conjunction with the DSE lead coordinator, consider whether the support of the Counselling and Mental Health Service would be appropriate for staff in their area, as detailed in Appendix 4.
- Be the point of contact in the School for liaison with the DSE lead coordinator and other University Offices.
- Gather from within the Division/Department all records pertaining to the student and send a complete set electronically to the Executive Director for the Student Experience. This must include: details of which modules the student had taken, a summary of all attendance, all assessment outcomes, any emails or other records that relate in any way to attendance, or pastoral support, documentation relating to mitigating circumstances, appeals and complaints and a copy of the current course handbook.
- Once the school receives the formal notification letter from the Director of Campus Life, they should arrange to update the student record, following the guidance outlined in the CS Training" Guidance for Staff Responding to a Student Death How to Record the Death of a Student On the advice of the DSE lead coordinator, arrange for a letter of condolence to be sent from the Head of Division/Department/School.
- Refer enquiries from media such as newspaper and television, without comment, to the Media Relations Team within the Directorate of Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment.
- Liaise with the Faculty eLearning team and IT Services to ensure that material produced by the student in the course of their studies is preserved (e.g. Canvas, student's IT account) so that it can be made available to the student's family or next of kin. Please note that requests for access to IT accounts from external parties, e.g. parents, police etc. must be directed to the DSE lead coordinator.
- Consider whether the student has completed sufficient elements of the Programme to receive a posthumous award and, if so, to liaise via the DSE lead coordinator with the family to establish their wishes on this.

Throughout the above and thereafter

- Keep the DSE lead coordinator informed of any developments or emerging issues.

The Residential Life Manager will:

- Inform the student cohort in the Hall, where applicable, seeking advice from the Counselling and Mental Health Service about how best to do this. (Note: the news may come as a great shock to fellow students and consideration must be given to providing support and/or information about how to access support services, including the ResLife Team and the Counselling and Mental Health Service.)
- Consider allocating a private space where those immediately impacted in a hall of residence can use as a quiet space.
- Consider holding a group meeting of residents supported by a member of the Counselling and Mental Health Service.
- Liaise with the DSE lead coordinator in respect of family visits and access to the student's personal effects, if the student has been resident in a University Hall of Residence.
- Inform the Accommodation Office Manager to update the student record in Kinetic.

The Student Finance Manager will:

- Immediately check system/s to ensure invoices (e.g. fees) are not issued and payments (e.g. bursaries) are stopped.
- Arrange for fees and/or rent to be refunded in accordance with University regulations.
- Liaise with University of Manchester Library Customer Services Manager to ensure any Library fines or other monies owing are not pursued.
- Liaise with the Student Loans Company (where applicable) and the School coordinator to ensure that non SLC funders/sponsors are informed and reimbursed as appropriate.
- Update the DSE lead coordinator with progress on the above actions.
- In the event of any need to liaise with the deceased's next of kin, this should be done through the DSE lead coordinator in order to limit the number of people in contact with the family.

Three: Media Relations

It is increasingly common for news of a student's death to break *via* social media and to attract press interest before the University has been notified.

The Head of Communications will:
– Liaise with the News and Media Relations Manager as the reference point for press enquiries received in the University. – Correct any factually incorrect information that the press already has on the basis that the publication of false information will be more distressing to the student's family and next of kin in the long run, whilst noting any confidential/data protection issues which may affect this. – Challenge any media reporting about a student death that does not respect the Samaritan's media guidelines. – Liaise immediately with the DSE lead coordinator to ensure that the news can be investigated, key people informed and processes initiated. – Liaise directly with the DSE lead coordinator in all cases where there is likely to be a more intense level of press interest e.g. suspected suicide, suspicious circumstances, communicable diseases. – Where a University interviewee is required, this is likely to be the DSE lead coordinator. – Ensure that the Media Relations Team is aware of the procedure to follow in the event of the absence of the Head of Communications.

Four: Recording and Monitoring

The Executive Director for the Student Experience will:
– Liaise with the relevant School, Hall of Residence and/or Student Support Service if any issues of concern emerge regarding the circumstances of the death or the student's relationship with the University prior to the death. – Lead on conducting a Serious Student Incident Review to support learning to minimise the chance of a recurrence or a similar incident involving another student. Complete a Serious Incident Review Final Report, ensuring that relevant information is reported to the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee and Board of Governors https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=62029. – Maintain a record of all student deaths verified in each academic year and review this annually. – Ensure that this guidance is reviewed annually and remains up-to-date and fit for purpose. Following each annual review, circulate this guidance and supporting documentation to the circulation list overleaf. –

Circulation List:

Office of the President and Vice Chancellor
Office of the Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer
Vice President for Teaching, Learning & Students
Vice Deans for Teaching, Learning & Students
Vice President for Research
Associate Vice Presidents for Research
Vice President & Deans of Faculty
Executive Directors of Faculty Operations
Heads of Schools
Heads of School Operations
Heads of Teaching, Learning & Student Experience
Faculty PGR Services Managers
DSE Lead Coordinator
Executive Director for the Student Experience
Head of Counselling & Mental Health Service
Head of Advice & Response
Head of Teaching & Learning Delivery
Student Finance Manager
Director of Residential & Sport Services
Residential Life Manager
Head of Disability Advisory and Support Services
Head of Occupational Health Services
Head of Student Data, Analysis & Records
Director of International Development
Head of Access, Student Employability, Success & Development
Student Administration Manager
Student Experience Officer
The University Deputy Secretary
Solicitor – University Matters
Director of Compliance & Risk
Information Management Officer, Division of Donor & Alumni Relations
Director of Communications, Marketing & Student Recruitment
Director of Communications

Head of Communications
News & Media Relations Manager
Social Media & Digital Communications Manager
Student Communications & Marketing Manager
Credit Manager, Accounts Receivable
Associate Director: Faculty & Student Partnerships, The University of Manchester Library
Chief Executive, Students' Union
Students' Union Advice Centre Manager
Compliance & Risk Officer – for inclusion in the University EIM pack
Supporting Students website
Upload to University document store

Appendix 1 - Family Liaison and Other Considerations – Checklist for Responding to a Student Death

Consider	**Who**
Would the family like to visit? Do they require accommodation? Provide accommodation at university expense (e.g. Hyatt Regency Manchester)	DSE Lead Coordinator
If the student has been resident in a University Hall of Residence, liaise with the Residential Life Manager to coordinate access to student's accommodation.	DSE Lead Coordinator in liaison with Residential Life Manager
Who would the family like to meet? Families will generally wish to meet with a member of academic staff who can discuss their loved one's academic life, and it is unlikely to be appropriate to delegate this responsibility to a member of administrative staff.	DSE Lead Coordinator in liaison with School Coordinator
Can examples of the student's work be given to the family? Consider archiving any Canvas in case the family would like them. Contact your Faculty eLearning support team. If access to the student's One drive required, either for the family or in the event that access is required for purposes of research etc. an IT Account Access Request will need to be made: (http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=16278)	School Coordinator in liaison with the DSE Lead Coordinator

When informing staff and students in the School, consider the nature of the impact on them. What is the most appropriate means of communication? What support might be necessary as a result of the news? Contact the University Counselling and Mental Health Service for advice and to arrange the offer of support to staff and other students.	School Coordinator in liaison with the Head of the Counselling and Mental Health Service
Would it be appropriate to send a formal letter of condolence to the family/next of kin from the School? Please note that the President's Office will have sent condolences on behalf of the University, but this will be necessarily short, and you are likely to want to include more information, depending on the length of time the student has been studying at the University.	School Coordinator in liaison with the DSE lead coordinator
Consider whether the School would like to make a more detailed external tribute comment or other form of recognition. What are the wishes of the family in this regard? If you decide the answer is 'yes' you must contact the DSE lead coordinator; they can help you ask the family whether they would be happy for the University to make a comment and establish whether they would wish to see any copy in advance.	School Coordinator in liaison with the DSE lead coordinator
Consider funeral attendance and the provision of an appropriate tribute. What are the wishes of the family in this regard? Will students or staff wish to attend? Ideas to consider might include a book of condolence or a wreath. You may wish to seek the views of fellow students. If members of School staff are to attend the funeral, this should include an appropriate representative of the academic staff of the School. Inform staff and students of funeral arrangements as appropriate. Travel expenses, expenditure on wreaths or similar tributes to mark the death of a student may be made from university funds but must conform to the relevant Financial Regulations and Procedures.	DSE Lead Coordinator in liaison with School Coordinator

The student may be eligible for a posthumous award. Establish if they have met the criteria and then discuss with the family to ascertain their wishes in this regard. Contact the Head of Teaching and Learning Delivery: janine.holdway@manchester.ac.uk https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=51163	School Coordinator in liaison with the DSE Lead Coordinator

Appendix 2 - KEY CONTACTS

	Key Contact	Details
Making the first contact with the family/next of kin, arranging a visit, access to University Halls of Residence	DSE Lead Coordinator	DSE Directorate Office dse@manchester.ac.uk
Enquiries from external authorities	Executive Director for the Student Experience	DSE Directorate Office dse@manchester.ac.uk
Support for staff and students	Head of Counselling and Mental Health Service	Counselling and Mental Health Service x52864
Tracing members of the University community who may not have been readily identified but who may be affected	Head of Advice and Response	Advice and Response Team adviceandresponse@manchester.ac.uk
Preservation of student work produced/stored in BlackBoard or equivalent	Faculty eLearning teams	http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/elearning-distance-learning/ Teaching and learning | StaffNet | The
Access to a student's University IT Account - *please note that requests for access to IT accounts from external parties, e.g. parents, police etc. must be directed to the DSE Lead Coordinator*	IT Risk Manager, IT Services	http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=16278
Posthumous Awards	Head of Teaching and Learning Delivery	Procedures for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degrees https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=51163
Fees, payments and bursaries	Student Finance Manager	patrick.ryan@manchester.ac.uk
Media liaison	Head of Communications	Directorate of Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment or out-of-hours on-call lead, as published in Simon Merrywest's calendar.

Appendix 3 - Recipients of Notification of a Student Death

This document lists those who automatically receive notification of a student death from the Director of Campus Life, and the actions for which they are responsible. Notification will only be made by the Division of Campus Life.

Basic notification will include:

- Name of student
- Student ID number
- Subject and Year of Study
- School
- Name of School Coordinator
- Name of DSE Lead Coordinator
- Date of death

Additionally, the following details will be shared with specific relevant colleagues on a strictly need to know basis:

- Next of kin contact details
- Brief circumstances of death (where known)
- Hall of Residence/residential arrangements

Note:

Any contact from the press or other media should be directed, without comment, to the Media Relations Team within the Directorate of Communications, Marketing and Student Recruitment. Staff in that office will prepare a statement for the press, if required, and will handle external enquiries.

Recipient	Action required
Office of the President and Vice Chancellor	Send a letter of condolence on behalf of the University.
Office of the Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer	For information.
Vice President for Teaching, Learning & Students	For information.
Vice President for Research	For information.
Associate Vice President for Research	For information.
Executive Director for the Student Experience	For information.
Director of Residential & Sport Services	For information.
Solicitor – University Matters	Liaise with the DSE lead coordinator in the event of enquiries from agencies such as the Police and Coroner's office.
Director of Compliance and Risk	For information.
Director of Comms, Marketing & Student Recruitment	For information.
Director of Communications	For information.
Head of Communications	For action as per this guidance.
Head of the Counselling & Mental Health Service	Liaise with the named School coordinator and (if applicable) the Residential Life Manager to offer support to staff and students and arrange for the Counselling and Mental Health Service records to be updated.
Head of Advice & Response	Coordinate any practical support and lead on tracing others who might be impacted acting as initial point of contact and support for this group.
Vice President & Deans of Faculty	For information.
Vice Dean for Teaching, Learning & Students	For information.
Head of School	For information.
Director of Faculty Operations	For Information.
Head of School Operations	For information.
Head of Teaching, Learning & Student Experience	For information.
Faculty PGR Services Manager	For information.
School Coordinator (if different to above)	For action as per this guidance.
Residential Life Manager	For action as per this guidance.
Head of Disability Services	Update DASS records and inform external support providers, assessment centres and funding bodies.
Head of Occupational Health	Update Occupational Health records.
Head of Student Data, Analysis and Records	Ensure that appropriate amendments have been made to the Student Record in Campus Solutions.
Director of International Development	Liaise with the sponsors/High Commission/Consulate as appropriate.
Head of Access, Student Employability, Success and Development	Liaise with Careers Service to update records, including Graduate Outcomes, Careerslink, employability team, Faculty Careers contact's records.
Student Administration Manager	For information.
Student Finance Manager	For action as per this guidance.

Credit Manager, Accounts Receivable	Ensure any outstanding debt is not pursued and payments are refunded as appropriate.
News And Media Relations Manager	For information/action (in liaison with the Head of Communications).
Social Media and Digital Communications Manager	For information/action (in liaison with the Head of Communications).
Student Communications and Marketing Manager	Ensure no communications are sent to the deceased student.
Head of Teaching and Learning Delivery	Update Institutional Student Satisfaction Survey data.
Information Management Officer, DDAR	Update records held by Division of Donor and Alumni Relations.
Associate Director: Faculty & Student Partnerships, The University of Manchester Library	Ensure library records are updated and to ensure any Library fines or other monies owing are not pursued.
The University Deputy Secretary	Liaise with the Students' Union to ensure records are updated and the deceased student is not invited to participate in elections/other activities.
Chief Executive, Students' Union	Update Student Union records.
Students' Union Advice Centre Manager	Update records held by the Students Union Advice Centre.
Student Experience Officer, DSE Directorate Office	Update central records.

Appendix 4 - Checklist of considerations for tracing others who might be impacted when a student dies

This document lists members of the University community who might be impacted when a student dies. It is not an exhaustive list and the response in any particular case will need to be dealt with flexibly depending on the individual circumstances, with further consideration given to contacting other individuals as appropriate.

The Counselling & Mental Health Service will offer support to those who have been readily identified as in need in the immediate period after the death. The Advice and Response Team will lead on identifying those, beyond the immediate and obvious group, who may have been impacted and act as the initial point of contact and support for this group.

Current flatmates	If the student has been resident in a University Hall of Residence the Residential Life Manager can help identify flatmates/corridor residents. If the student has been renting in the private sector the Head of Student Data, Analysis and Records can check who else is registered at that address. The manager of Manchester Student Homes can also help.
Previous flatmates	The Head of Student Data, Analysis and Records can check any previous addresses and identify who else has previously lived with the student.
Circle of friends	Actively ask any known friends/flatmates to help put us in touch with any other friends or to share through social media details of support available. Ask the Residences team if they are aware of any friendship groups. Ask the Social Media and Digital Communications Manager to check for any profiles and obvious links to others, or membership of any University societies or clubs.
Tutorial group members	Liaise with the named School Coordinator to identify students who are members of tutorial groups.
Academic staff	Liaise with the named School Coordinator to identify key academic staff in the School, such as the Head of Division, Programme Director and Academic Adviser.
Professional Services School staff	Liaise with the named School Coordinator to identify key Professional Services staff in the School, such as those working in the Student Support Office or the Programme Administrator.
Professional Services	Check with Heads of Services to see if the student was known to staff within;

central support staff	- Counselling & Mental Health Service - Disability Advisory and Support Service - Occupational Health Service - Advice and Response Team
Residential & Sport Services	Check with the Head of Residential & Sport Services to see if the student was known to staff within; - The ResLife Team - Domestic Services staff - Sports staff / clubs
Security Services	Follow up with members of the Security crew who may have been present at the death and/or those who may have previously been affected by similar cases in the past.

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