

University Procedures in the event of a Student Death or Serious Accident

The death of a member of the university student body is a serious matter for the whole of the university community especially the student's close friends, peers and school or faculty staff. It is important that the University reacts to events in a way that acknowledges the loss properly, deals sensitively with the aftermath and supports the bereaved both on and off campus.

Key Roles

It is essential that no matter where the message originates, there is one central figure to whom the news is immediately transmitted and through whom the rest of the University is alerted. The Head of Student Wellbeing or designated representative will take responsibility for informing all relevant staff and coordinating responses as necessary.

The person who is first notified of the death should report it to the Head of Student Wellbeing, providing as much relevant information as possible i.e.:

- The deceased's full name
- Their programme of study at the University
- The cause of death
- A contact telephone number for the next-of-kin or other family representative
- Funeral arrangements, including requests for floral tributes etc.

In most cases, the Course or School is the place where the student is known personally to a large number of people, who will potentially be most affected by the death. It is normally appropriate for a representative from the School, where the student is known to reach out to the family of the deceased student to offer condolences on behalf of the Course team/School as they had a tangible connection to them. Heads of School should try to ensure that accurate information is disseminated promptly and that key staff in the School and Faculty are informed immediately, sharing the information on a need to know basis with Course Directors, Module Coordinators and other staff as appropriate.

A notification email will be issued via the Director of Student & Graduate Success to inform Senior officers and relevant departmental contacts to ensure that no inappropriate communications take place with the bereaved family.

The Vice-Chancellor and the School also have key parts to play in offering condolences and in recognising the contribution of the individual to the University.

Breaking the News

Whilst knowledge about the sudden death of a student will become known very quickly to a portion of the University community, it is important that the principles of 'need to know', and 'need to support' are considered at this stage. Informing fellow students of their peer's death needs to be done sensitively and quickly. This can be done either at the end of a lecture or seminar, or possibly by calling a special meeting. The Student Wellbeing team and /or the Chaplaincy can be contacted if advice is needed on conducting this type of meeting. They may also be free to be in attendance if it is thought appropriate. In general, it is preferable to be face-to-face in a quiet room where the person/people are seated. Warn them that there is some bad news and then tell them directly and clearly. Be aware that they will be in shock for awhile, and need time for the reality to sink in. The presence of close friends or colleagues to give them support is important. All the facts as far as they are accurately known should be shared, without breach of confidentiality, as should the nature and availability of on-going support available within the university, plus details of a named person to contact for further information, if necessary. Another meeting may need to be called once there is any further information. When transmitting the news it is also important to advise who has already been informed and to enquire whether anyone else should be informed subsequently.

Press queries for information however should at all times be referred to the PR and Communications team (pressoffice@ulster.ac.uk). Contact for official purposes should be through email or telephone for speed.

Any photographs of the deceased should be removed from notice boards and under certain circumstances, students and staff may well need to be informed of the possibility of media intrusion.

Even where the death follows a long illness or the student has been absent, it will be appropriate to follow these procedures.

Attendance at the Funeral

If staff and students wish to attend the funeral, arrangements will normally be made by the School and it will be appropriate to cancel classes or give students leave and assistance with travel if necessary. Some students will not wish to attend for personal reasons and this decision should also be included in the range of options suggested.

Letters of Condolence

The Vice-Chancellor will write on behalf of the University. Further contact with the family by university staff should be co-ordinated by the Head of School or designated representative.

Collecting of Personal Possessions

Collection of the possessions of the deceased, including their work, will be a distressing experience, in particular for the next-of-kin. The situation will need to be handled sensitively and with respect to the wishes of those directly involved. The Head of Student Wellbeing or designated representative will liaise with Residential Services should the student have been resident in Halls. Where necessary, it might be possible to arrange accommodation and support for the relatives during their time at the university.

Memorials

Students may decide they want to stage their own memorial service, event or fund, especially if it had not been possible to attend the funeral. The Chaplaincy may well be able to facilitate this on such occasions and have considerable experience in doing so but this should not be done in the immediate aftermath of the student's death and should only be done with the consent of the family.

Range and Duration of Grief Reactions

"Normal" responses to bereavement range from anger to depression and listlessness. It is common for responses to take up to two years to emerge and anniversaries often provoke unanticipated feelings, so as time passes staff and students may continue to be affected by the death. This may come to light in a number of ways such as poor attendance or a drop in exam or coursework performance and it is important that staff and students know that help and support is available.



Sources of Support for Students and Staff

Student Wellbeing

The Student Wellbeing team will provide support for students following a student death and this can be arranged by contacting the Head of Student Wellbeing or the Student Wellbeing Manager on campus. The Student Wellbeing team can allocate staff to visit the department to meet with students and staff to debrief them and discuss their needs following an incident as required.

Claire Drummond - Head of Student Wellbeing

c.drummond@ulster.ac.uk or 028 9536 5138

Drew Neill - Student Wellbeing Manager (BF)

d.neill@ulster.ac.uk or 028 9536 5843

Ciara Thompson – Student Wellbeing Manager (CE)

c.thompson@ulster.ac.uk or 028 7012 3435

Catherine McDaid – Student Wellbeing Manager (D/LD)

c.mcdaid@ulster.ac.uk or 028 7167 5285

Student Wellbeing (central contact details) studentwellbeing@ulster.ac.uk or 028 9536 7000

24/7 student counselling support can also be accessed through Lena (formerly Inspire) via 0800 028 5510.

Lifeline operates a 24/7 crisis response helpline on 0808 808 8000

Employee Wellbeing

Support to staff who may have been involved in a traumatic incident can be arranged through the Employee Wellbeing team or Occupational Health services.

For enquiries related to Employee Wellbeing contact employee wellbeing@ulster.ac.uk.

For staff queries related to Occupational Health contact OCCHealth@ulster.ac.uk.

Staff can also access counselling support via Inspire Workplace on 0808 800 0002 or in an emergency through the Lifeline crisis response helpline 0808 808 8000.

Chaplaincy

The University Chaplaincy will provide support to both staff and students via the following contact details:

Belfast [Belfast chaplaincy](#)

Coleraine [Coleraine](#)

Derry/Londonderry [Derry~Londonderry](#)

Appendix 1 - Designated Tasks and Responsibilities

The following steps must be taken by all responsible parties in the event of a student death or serious accident. If you wish to consult further on any of these, please contact the Head of Student Wellbeing or Student Wellbeing Manager on your campus (contact details on page 4).

Head of Student Wellbeing (or designated representative)

- Receive notification of student death or serious incident.
- Contact the person who reported the event to identify any support needs for students who may be impacted by news/event.
- Check records for any previous contact with the student.
- Liaise with all relevant contacts and coordinate information and arrangements and support where necessary.
- Ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and liaise with Employee Wellbeing to ensure staff equally supported as needed.
- Determine if it is appropriate to instigate the Critical Incident Response Protocol to manage the critical incident response and subsequent crisis response evaluation.

Director of Student & Graduate Success (or designated representative)

- Issue the Student Death Notification to communicate the news of the student death or serious accident by email to keystaff who are asked to share information with others in their area as appropriate.

Head of School, Course Director and other School staff

- Head of School (or designated representative) should ensure that news is communicated to staff within the School as appropriate.
- The Head of School or Course Director should consult with the Student Wellbeing team on how best to break the news to the other students on the course. The news should be delivered by the Head of School or his/her nominee who has had close contact with the student, but staff from the Student Wellbeing team can be present if requested.
- Depending on the circumstances, the School may wish to cancel relevant classes for the remainder of the day to allow students to react to the news.
- If students wish to attend the funeral, it may be appropriate to cancel classes on the day of the funeral.
- It may also be appropriate to extend course deadlines and defer assessments until after the funeral.
- Organise transport for attendance of students at funeral, liaising with Students' Union to avoid duplication.

- Head of School/Course Director or other nominated academic staff should represent the School at the funeral.
- After the funeral, letters of condolence may be sent from the Executive Dean/Head of School and/or Course Director and staff who knew student, as appropriate.
- Consideration should be given to students suffering severe grief reactions, with referrals to the Student Wellbeing team as appropriate.

Head of PR and Internal Communications (or designated representative)

- All enquiries from the press or media should be dealt with by the University PR and Internal Communications team in order to safeguard the interests of the University and protect the bereaved relatives, fellow students or staff from unsolicited or improper approaches from the media.
- Build up dossier of facts about the circumstances of the death or accident, as well as details on the student's next of kin, course attended etc., so that rumours do not begin to circulate.

Professional Services (including Student Operations, Finance, DARO, Employability & Graduate Futures, and Global Engagement)

- Amend records to list student as 'leaver' and ensure that all relevant databases are updated – these arrangements should also apply to prospective students.
- Student Operations staff will inform the relevant Education Authority so they can update their records.
- The Fees Office and Library Service should amend records to ensure that no distress is caused to relatives by notices about debts or overdue books being sent out before paper records are amended.

Head of Residential Life (or designated representative)

- Inform other residents and personnel (as appropriate) if the deceased was a resident in University owned or controlled accommodation and consult with the Student Wellbeing team if it would be beneficial for them to be in attendance.
- If the student has been living in university owned or controlled accommodation, after the funeral make inventory of student's belongings and arrange for them to be removed from the room.
- Offer relatives the opportunity to collect possessions themselves if they wish, with the option of University staff packing and delivering them to relatives in person if preferred. This task should be done by at least two people because of possible distress and because it is also important to have witnesses when making the inventory.

Chaplains

- If death has been anticipated, the appropriate Chaplain may already have been in contact with the family, student friends and staff.
- If unanticipated, Chaplains may make contact with those students most closely connected with the deceased student and, as appropriate, with the bereaved family.
- If the student is hospitalised, Chaplains may attend hospital to meet grieving parents and support injured parties.

- Ascertain the religious denomination, if any, of the deceased and what Chaplaincy involvement, if any, is required by the family in the funeral.
- Act appropriately according to family wishes regarding the funeral service.
- Maintain contact with student's friends, lecturing staff and those affected by the event, as appropriate to their needs, liaising with Student Support as appropriate.
- Offer individual or group support to those affected by trauma in liaison with the Student Wellbeing team.
- Assist in organisation of memorial service if appropriate.

Students' Union

- In the case of a serious accident/unanticipated death liaise with the Head of Student Wellbeing or delegated representative to identify any supporting arrangements required.
- Provide a minibus to funeral for student mourners, if required.
- SU President or nominee to represent Students' Union at funeral.
- Offer support to students suffering grief reaction and help them to engage with the Student Wellbeing team.
- Organise awareness campaigns to students on improving safety, if appropriate.

Security

- In the event of a sudden or assumed death on campus discovered by security personnel, emergency procedures for contacting Emergency Services, PSNI, relatives etc. as detailed in the Emergency Directory should be followed.
- Ensure that other students are removed from the scene and supported in a safe space to avoid further distress.
- Ensure that the Head of Student Wellbeing or their designate is informed immediately.

On occasion it may be appropriate to review the passage of events and implementation of this procedure, so any necessary amendments can be made. Please any direct feedback to the Head of Student Wellbeing in the first instance.

Appendix 2 - Designated Staff to receive notification following Student Death

Staff to be notified on every instance of a student death:			PA / Secretary
Senior Officers	Vice Chancellor Director of the VC office	Prof Paul Bartholomew Fiona Kane	Kerry Derbyshire Claire-Anne Mills
	Deputy Vice Chancellor	Prof Paul Seawright	Levi Hanes
	University Provost	Prof Cathy Gormley-Heenan	Deirdre MacFadyen
	PVC Research	Prof Liam Maguire	Paula Sheerin
	PVC Academic Quality & Student Experience	Prof Odette Hutchinson	Averil Johnston
Student & Graduate Success	Director of Student & Graduate Success	Prof Angela Scanlon	Stephanie Croker
	Head of Student Wellbeing	Claire Drummond	
	Head of Employability & Graduate Futures	Shauna McCloy	
	Head of Student Success	Lorraine Lavery-Bowen	
Campus Life	Director of Campus Life	Gareth Kennedy (Interim)	Michele Wright
	Head of Residential Services	Glenda Campbell (Interim)	
	Head of Sports Services	Nigel Dobson	Kirsty McClung
Finance & Information	Chief Strategy & Finance Officer	Elaine Hartin	Sussanne Gillespie
	Director of Finance	Lucia O'Connor	Janice Moore
	Chief Digital and Information Officer	Mark Taglietti	Christine Lynas
	Interim Director of Academic Business Development	Prof Ruth Fee	Claire Paradi Sharon Copeland?
Fees office	Financial Accountant – Tuition Fees	Ryan McLaughlin	
People & Culture	Chief People Officer	Damian McAlister	Jayne Purdy
	Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing	Geoff Gillan	
	University Secretary	Clare Jamison	Jayne Moore
Physical Resources	Director of Estates	Michael Fitzpatrick	Tracy Smith-Wright
	Head of Estate Customer Services (CE/MG)	Derek Bell	
	Head of Estate Customer Services (BT/JN)	Trevor Glenn	
PR & Communications	Director of Marketing & Communications		
Alumni	Director of Development & Alumni	Malachy O'Neill (temporary)	Janet Farren
Student Services	Head of Admissions	Ronan Cullen	

	Head of Student Operations	Sarah Hudson	
Students' Union	Chief Executive Officer	David Longstaff	
	Students' Union President	Ethan Davies (24/25)	
Library Services	University Librarian & Deputy Chief Digital & Information Officer	Janet Peden	
Associate Deans (AQSE)	Life & Health Sciences Computing & Engineering Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences Ulster Business School	Prof Neil Cook Prof Michaela Keenan Louise O'Boyle Prof Heather Farley	

People to be advised on Campus attended by student:			
	Student Wellbeing Managers	Ciara Thompson CE) Drew Neill (BT) Catherine McDaid (DLD)	
Students' Union	VP Academic & Student Affairs (Belfast)	Amensinor Favour Okphos	2024/25
	VP Academic & Student Affairs (Coleraine)	Chris Murray	
	VP Academic & Student Affairs (DLD)	Reece Armstrong	
Residential Services	Residential Services Manager (Coleraine)	Clodagh Scott	
	Residential Services Manager (Jordanstown)	Chris Muir	
	Residential Services Manager (Magee)	Oonagh McAllister	
Chaplaincy	Chaplains (Coleraine)	John Coulter Sam Livingstone David Stewart Kevin McGuckien Jim Lyons	
	Chaplains (Belfast)	Gail Mercer Gerry Clarke Cheryl Meban Robert Armstrong	
	Chaplains (DLD)	Graeme Orr Patrick Lagan Christian Arnold	

Also to be copied (Faculty/School/Course related)

- Executive Dean
- Associate Dean for Education
- Director of Faculty Operations (DFO)
- Head of School
- Faculty Manager
- Course Director

Appendix 3 - UU Procedures on Serious Accident or Death on Campus

- Should a serious accident or death occur on campus it is vital to involve emergency services immediately. This may be done via security staff, or if more expeditious, contact emergency services first and then inform security.
- If a body is discovered, the area should be secured, and no other action taken until the Police have arrived and their advice given.
- The police will arrange for the body to be removed, and for any necessary post mortem to be undertaken.
- The police (or hospital) will normally arrange for the next-of-kin to be informed. The university may need to assist the police by making available this information from the Student Records System.
- If there are witnesses whom the police wish to interview, they should be taken to a private area removed from the immediate scene as soon as possible, and provided with appropriate comforts.
- Following the immediate emergency response, the tasks and responsibilities detailed in Appendix 1 should then commence when appropriate to do so.