

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 Experience & 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 Experience & 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.

The Head of Student Experience & Wellbeing will also inform other relevant departments to ensure that no inappropriate communications take place with the bereaved family.

The Vice-Chancellor and the Provosts 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 a while, 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 Experience & 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 and Provosts 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

The Student Wellbeing team will provide support for students following a student death and this can be arranged by contacting the Head of Student Experience & 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 Experience & Wellbeing

c.drummond@ulster.ac.uk or 028 9036 6602

Drew Neill Student Wellbeing Manager (JN/BF)

d.neill@ulster.ac.uk or 028 9036 8199

Andrea Proctor Student Wellbeing Manager (CE)

ac.proctor@ulster.ac.uk or 028 7012 3608

Marie Duffy Student Wellbeing Manager (MG)

m.duffy1@ulster.ac.uk or 028 7167 5294

Student Wellbeing (general contact details)

studentwellbeing@ulster.ac.uk or 028 9536 7000

www.ulster.ac.uk/studentwellbeing

Out of working hours in an emergency contact Lifeline on 0808 808 8000 but counselling support can also be accessed through Inspire Students 0800 028 5510.

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 employeewellbeing@ulster.ac.uk
For enquiries 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 Lifeline 0808 808 8000.

The University Chaplaincy will provide support to both staff and students.

Belfast/Jordanstown	5F01/1D05 Prayer Room	Telephone: 028 9036 6404
Coleraine	L101/L102 Prayer Room	Telephone: 028 7012 4654
Magee	MC108	Telephone: 028 7167 5614

Campus Security/Emergency Number for all Sites 22222

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 Experience & Wellbeing or Student Wellbeing Manager on your campus (contact details on page 4).

Head of Student Experience & Wellbeing (or designated representative)

- Receive notification of student death or serious incident
- Communicate the news of the student death or serious accident by email to key staff who are asked to share information with others in their area as appropriate.
- 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
- Coordinate information and arrangements and support where necessary.
- Ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and liaise with Staff Wellbeing to ensure staff are equally supported.
- Arrange debriefing sessions where all those involved in the crisis are given an opportunity to talk about their experiences and evaluate how the crisis was managed if required.

Head of School, Course Director and/or other academic staff

- Head of School (or designated representative) should ensure that news is communicated to the Course Director and other 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 or mistakes occur in the handling of the event.

Professional Services (including Student Admin, Finance, DARO, Careers 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.
- Registry staff will inform relevant Education Authorities so they can update their records.
- The Finance Office and Educational Services Learning Resource Centres 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 Services (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.

Provosts

- The Provost may wish to attend the funeral or if unable to do so, delegate appropriate personnel to represent the University.
- If wished by the bereaved family, the Provost may organise a memorial service with the assistance of the University Chaplaincy, if appropriate.

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 Provost if required in organisation of memorial service.

Students' Union

- In the case of a serious accident/unanticipated death liaise with the Head of Student Experience & 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 doctor, police, 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 Experience & Wellbeing or their designate is informed immediately.

On occasion it may also be useful 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 Experience & Wellbeing in the first instance.

Appendix 2 - Staff to be notified in every instance of a student death

Role	Name	PA
Vice Chancellor	Professor Paddy Nixon	Jayne Purdy
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)	Professor Paul Bartholomew	Averil Johnston
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research & External Affairs)	Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan	Marina O'Rourke
Chief Operating Officer	Niamh Lamond	Mark Higgins
Provost (Belfast & Jordanstown)	Raffaella Folli	
Provost (Coleraine)	Karise Hutchinson	
Provost (Magee)	Malachy O'Neill	
Chief Digital & Information Officer	Richard Millar	Christine Lynas
Chief Finance Officer	Peter Hope	Janice Moore
Director of People & Culture	Damian McAlister	Trish Small
Director of Campus Life	Amanda Castray	Michele Wright
Director of Estates	Michael Fitzpatrick	Joan Nelson
Director of Marketing & Communications	Joanne McGowan	
Director of Employability & Careers	Shauna McCloy (Acting)	
Director of Development & Alumni Relations	Edward Friel	
Deputy Director (Student Admin & Registry)	Ruth Wasson	Sarah Dooley
Head of Facilities Services	Judith Hamilton	
Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing	Geoff Gillan	Jessica McConkey
Income Accountant	Hilary Hogg	
Students' Union President	Andrew McAnallen su.president@uusu.org	
Head of Residential Services	Gareth Kennedy	
Head of ICT Customer Services & Support	Ann McSherry	
University Librarian	Janet Peden	
Head of Student Experience & Wellbeing	Claire Drummond	

Appendix 2 - Staff to be notified depending on the campus of the deceased student

Role	Name	Campus
UUSU Vice President VP.belfast@uusu.org	Shauna Murphy	Belfast
UUSU Vice President VP.coleraine@uusu.org	Owen McCloskey	Coleraine
UUSU Vice President VP.jordanstown@uusu.org	Oisin Kinsella	Jordanstown
UUSU Vice President VP.magee@uusu.org	Collette Cassidy	Magee
Residential Life Manager	Glenda Campbell	Jordanstown/Belfast
Residential Life Manager	Clodagh Scott	Coleraine
Residential Life Manager	Mary Murphy	Magee
Chaplain	Chaplains-j@ulster.ac.uk	JN/BF
Chaplain	Chaplains-c@ulster.ac.uk	Coleraine
Chaplain	Chaplains-m@ulster.ac.uk	Magee
Student Wellbeing Manager	Drew Neill	JN/BF
Student Wellbeing Manager	Andrea Proctor	Coleraine
Student Wellbeing Manager	Marie Duffy	Magee

Please note: If the deceased student is a PhD Researcher the Doctoral College should be notified with the Faculty

Faculty	Role	Name
Doctoral College	Director of the Doctoral College	Professor Marie Murphy
	Head of the Doctoral College (BF/JN)	Dr Jackie Reilly
	Head of the Doctoral College (CE/MG)	Professor Alison Gallagher

Appendix 2 - Staff to be advised dependant on the course attended

Faculty	Role	Name	PA
Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	Executive Dean	Paul Seawright	Pearl Platt
	Director of Faculty Operations	Colm Crean	
	Head of Belfast School of Art	Louise O'Boyle (Acting)	
	Head of School of Applied Social & Policy Sciences	Professor Kristian Lasslett	
	Head of School of Arts & Humanities	Dr Tom Maguire	
	Head of School of Communication & Media	Dr Catrin Rhys	
	Head of School of Education	Dr David Barr	
	Head of School of Law	Professor Eugene McNamee	
Faculty of Computing, Engineering & the Built Environment	Executive Dean	Professor Liam Maguire	Paula Sheerin
	Director of Faculty Operations	Philip Doherty	
	Head of Belfast School of Architecture & the Built Environment	Professor Neil Hewitt	
	Head of School of Computing	Professor Chris Nugent	
	Head of School of Computing, Engineering & Intelligent Systems	Dr Michaela Black	
	Head of School of Engineering	Professor James McLaughlin	
Faculty of Life & Health Sciences	Executive Dean	Carol Curran	Patricia Magill
	Director of Faculty Operations	Brian McAuley	
	Head of School of Biomedical Sciences	Professor Stephen McClean	
	Head of School of Geography & Environmental Sciences	Dr Sara Benetti	
	Head of School of Health Sciences	Professor Suzanne Martin	
	Head of School of Nursing	Professor Sonja McIlfratrick	
	Head of School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences	Professor Paul McCarron	
	Head of School of Psychology	Professor Melanie Giles	
	Head of School of Sport	Dr Ben Fitzpatrick	
Ulster Business School	Executive Dean	Mark Durkin	Paula Burns
	Director of Faculty Operations	Tom O'Neill	
	Head of Department of Accounting, Finance & Economics	Danielle McWall	
	Head of Department of Global Business & Enterprise	Dr Sandra Moffett (Acting)	
	Head of Department of Hospitality & Tourism Management	Dr Una McMahon-Beattie	
	Head of Department of Management, Leadership & Marketing	Dr Darryl Cummins	

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.