



Death of a Student

Procedure

This procedure applies to:

- All students on the University of the Built Environment taught programmes.
- London School of Architecture students.
- Postgraduate research students.

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1. Introduction

Sitting alongside the University of the Built Environment's [Death of a Student Policy \(opens new window\)](#), these procedures exist to ensure appropriate, sensitive and effective action is taken when the university is notified of the death of a current student.

It is important to note that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to managing the aftermath of a student death. Senior leaders and the postvention team must consider the information they have during the primary actions stage (see [section 4](#) below) and, using this document as a guide, make appropriate adjustments and decisions as needed in the circumstances. They will consider the sensitivities of the situation and the information held by the University about the student.

2. Postvention Team

Following a student death, a postvention team will work with senior leaders to coordinate actions to implement this procedure. The work of the postvention team is directed by the Director of Student Services and coordinated by the Safeguarding Manager.

3. Summary of responsibilities

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|---|---|
| Director of Student Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implements Death of a Student procedure.• Monitors actions.• Chair of Postvention Team. |
| Deputy Vice Chancellor (University Secretary), and/or Director of Academic Registry | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributes to/agrees primary actions• Represents/liaises with Executive and Trustees. |
| Director of Marketing, Communications and Brand | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitors external social media activity.• Develops internal and external comms. |
| Head of Disability and Welfare / Safeguarding Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinates work of Postvention Team and updating Director of Student Services.• Support and signposting for students/staff. |
| LSA Head of School | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides insight to additional support required for the dead of an LSA student |

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4. Primary actions (immediate)

Initial planning and decision making

Leads: Director of Student Services and Director of Academic Registry

| Action | Responsibility | Details |
|---|--|--|
| Director of Student Services informed of the report of a death. | Staff member receiving initial notification | Notification may happen via line manager or other reasonable route, but Director of Student Services should speak directly to the person who has been notified. ¹ |
| Deputy Vice Chancellor (University Secretary), Director of Academic Registry, Director of Marketing, Communications and Brand, and Head of Disability and Welfare notified. | Director of Student Services (or delegate) | Notified pre-confirmation to allow preparation for actions on confirmation OR for actions in light of a mistake or hoax. |
| Head of Disability and Welfare to a) notify other members of the postvention team who are not yet aware, that a death may have occurred and b) begin work on collating information to inform this procedure | Director of Student Services (or delegate) | Head of Disability and Welfare (with available members of the postvention and Safeguarding Team) to focus initially collating lists of staff and students likely to be most affected by the death. |
| Begin gathering lists of potentially affected people. | Head of Disability and Welfare with Postvention and Safeguarding Teams | Without providing notification to other members of staff at this stage: |

¹ It should be noted that the notification of a death may not be straightforward and may be unclear, first noticed on social media, or be a rumour amongst other students. It should be recognised that the route by which the information reaches the Director of Student Services may not be direct and initial information may need a level of investigation before verification via a next of kin/family member is attempted.

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| Action | Responsibility | Details |
|--|---|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather list of students who currently or have recently studied with the deceased student • Check on any relationships existing via student community activity and collate names. • Compile list of staff names where there has been close working with the deceased student (include apprenticeship team where appropriate, support staff, academic staff, and managers). • If the student is an apprentice, find establish who the employer is. • Check if any known siblings or family members also study or work at the University. |
| <p>Contact Next of Kin (NoK)/family member to confirm death and, if death confirmed, offer sympathies. Provide appropriate direct contact name, number and email address to NoK/family member for any further contact.</p> | <p>Director of Student Services (or delegate)</p> | <p>Where possible, and only where sensitivity allows, try to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cause of death • NoK/family’s wishes in regard to informing other students/staff. • Any expectations of the university. <p>When speaking to the NoK/family member:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make them aware of what steps the University are likely to take following the death of the student. • Establish whether there are any cultural/religious considerations. |

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|---|---|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish what level of contact they would like, and how they would like to be kept informed. |
| <p>Convene a meeting to update Deputy Vice Chancellor (University Secretary), Director of Academic Registry and Director of Marketing, Communications and Brand. Plan and delegate immediate actions.</p> | <p>Director of Student Services (or delegate)</p> | <p>This meeting should take place immediately after the above call, or within one hour if unable to contact the NoK/family member. Immediate actions will depend on the circumstances and the contact/conversation with NoK/family member but would usually include the items listed in Appendix A.</p> <p>The outcomes of this meeting should usually be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A communication/notification plan and timeline. A support plan for staff and students. An understanding of any additional sensitivities (e.g. if the death was by suicide, if there are specific cultural considerations or if the death is under investigation) and how to take these into account. Agreed actions for the Postvention Team and SLT. |
| <p>Inform and brief Senior Leaders and Stakeholders.</p> | <p>Deputy Vice Chancellor (University Secretary), Director of Student Services or delegate(s)</p> | <p>This might include the Principal, Chair of Trustees, and senior leaders at businesses (if the deceased student is an apprentice).</p> |

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5. Secondary actions

Communication, system and support updates

Lead: Head of Disability and Welfare with Postvention Team

| Action | Responsibility | Details |
|--|---|--|
| Notify relevant staff and students of the death. | As delegated by Director of Student Services | <p>The details of this will be decided at the primary actions meeting and will vary depending on the circumstances.</p> <p>Details of support available must be included when notifying staff and students.</p> <p>Different groups/people should be notified by the most appropriate means i.e. face to face, email etc.</p> <p>Particularly vulnerable students should be identified and supported as per their individual needs by the most relevant member of staff.</p> |
| If appropriate, send an all staff communication. | Deputy Vice Chancellor (University Secretary), Director of Student Services or delegate. | The stage at which to do this will be decided by the lead senior managers as part of the communication plan. |
| Arrange letter of condolence to NoK/family. | Deputy Chancellor (University Secretary), Director Student Services. | Respecting wishes expressed by NoK/family. |

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| Update core university systems (primarily SITs) to ensure appropriate codes are in place to indicate that the student is deceased. | Safeguarding Manager | Working with the appropriate systems and registry managers. |
| Ensure there are no webinars, tutorials or other commitments booked that will lead to communication attempts with the deceased student. | Safeguarding Manager | Working with appropriate managers (e.g. Acting Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Experience and Apprenticeships), Programme Leader(s), Head of School(s)). |
| If the student is an apprentice, notify the ESFA | Safeguarding Manager | Via Acting Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Experience and Apprenticeships). |
| Ensure Information Security, disablement of online accounts and removal of contact details from mailing databases and marketing activity | Safeguarding Manager | Working with the relevant University managers, ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VLE account is disabled • Student contact details are no longer available • All student accounts are blocked for an initial two months • Remove contact details of deceased student from any marketing mailshots, social media campaigns or other direct communications, including SITS |
| Ensure appropriate management of any outstanding fees or invoicing. | Safeguarding Manager | Work with the Finance Director and team to ensure invoicing, debt collection and invoicing to employers is put on hold or cancelled as appropriate in line with the University policy. |

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|---|---|---|
| Double check all communications have been halted. | Safeguarding Manager/Head of Disability and Welfare | <p>Working with the relevant managers including Programme Leaders, Academic Registry managers, Student Services managers and Data Team managers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the risk of sending any communication to the deceased student is eliminated. • check there are no assessments submitted or outstanding for the student • ensure graduate outcomes and graduation records are updated. |

6. Tertiary actions

Ongoing communications, support and review

Lead: Head of Disability and Welfare with Postvention Team

| Action | Responsibility | Details |
|---|--|--|
| Continue appropriate contact with the family. | Director of Student Services (or delegate) | <p>Remain in touch with the family/NoK in a way that is judged to be appropriate in the circumstances.</p> <p>This might include forwarding letters of condolence, circulation of funeral details, attendance at funeral or making of donation/sending of tribute.</p> |

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| <p>Make arrangements for posthumous award or graduation if appropriate and wanted by the family.</p> | <p>Head of Disability and Welfare</p> | <p>Working with Graduation lead.</p> |
| <p>Delete student IT accounts after two months (with the exception of data retained as part of a research project, which will be retained in line with research data storage timeframes).</p> | <p>Safeguarding Manager</p> | <p>Permanent deletion of the accounts suspended during the secondary actions above.</p> |
| <p>Ensure and review the availability and effectiveness of support offered to staff and students.</p> | <p>Head of Disability and Welfare</p> | <p>Ensure front line teams and module leaders/tutors are fully briefed to support distressed individuals and signpost them effectively.</p> <p>Ensure everyone affected has access to information regarding support.</p> <p>Review support regularly for an agreed time and consider if it is effective (e.g. does it become apparent we may need to facilitate counselling for some).</p> |
| <p>Implementation of, or contribution to, serious incident review, criminal investigation, or inquest.</p> | <p>Director of Student Services (or delegate), Deputy Vice Chancellor (University Secretary) and Director of Academic Registry</p> | <p>The University will be made aware of expectations placed upon them in relation to any requirements of the police or coroner.</p> <p>The Director of Student Services and Head of Disability and Welfare, in liaison with the family of the deceased student will launch a serious incident review in the case of a death by suicide.</p> |

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| Action | Responsibility | Details |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Review of procedure. | Director of Student Services and Head of Disability and Welfare | Depending on issues arising during the implementation of the Death of a Student Policy and Procedure, it may be appropriate to have a review or debrief with staff involved and/or family of the deceased and/or students, and update the policy or procedure as required |

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Appendix A

Suggested framework for initial planning meeting:

- Agree a level of confidentiality around information about the death and a timeline of who will be told and when/how (for example, if the death is being investigated by the police, it may be damaging for the university to release detailed information – even internally – immediately).
- Allocate responsibilities for notifying the people at the University closest to the student (e.g. academics, AOOs, ASET, D&W and anyone else who has worked closely with the deceased student). Decide on the priorities for the postvention team.
- Agree a plan to support the above for their own wellbeing, but also support them to answer questions from other students and staff (remember that the postvention team, safeguarding team and senior leaders may also need support).
- Decide on the means of communicating actions and receiving updates. Depending on the circumstances it may be appropriate to set up a group conversation on teams, or to arrange some meetings in person.
- Make a plan to notify students who knew the deceased student.
- In the case that the University is aware, or has reason to believe, the student has died by suicide, or has died in a way that may involve a police investigation or inquest, ensure that a named contact is agreed to work with external agencies and that front line staff know where to direct calls of this nature.
- Agree a timeline to re-contact the NoK/family in relation to funeral arrangements and more formal condolences.
- Plan actions around monitoring social media and any online/offline responses required with regard to online activity. It should be noted that news of a student death is most likely to spread publicly on social media, within informal chat groups and in direct messages between students prior to any formal confirmation to, or announcement by, the University. All plans made at this stage should take this into consideration, as well as the possibility of misinformation circulating.
- Prepare responses to media enquiries and any all-staff messaging if appropriate, and the timeline for communications, including letters of condolence to the family (and employer if relevant).
- If the student was an apprentice and died at the place of work associated with their apprenticeship, ensure access to risk assessments and any other relevant paperwork. Plan contact and on-going dialogue with the employer especially if the death is likely to be investigated by the HSE.

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- Where the report of a death is thought to be a hoax or a misunderstanding, agree the response to this, including on social media. Agree communications as required and any use of misconduct procedures or any requirement to report to the police.
- Where the University has been unable to make contact with the NoK/family, consider the information received so far and plan as far as is possible without confirmation to allow sensitive work and preparation to take place pre-confirmation or make a risk-assessed decision to use this procedure where the University can be reasonably certain the information is correct (e.g. if confirmation is received from the police rather than the NoK/family).