

PROCEDURE TO BE IMPLEMENTED FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A STUDENT/INTERNATIONAL STUDENT (updated January 2019)

This procedure outlines the actions and responsibilities when the University has received confirmed notification of the death of a student

Summary of Immediate Actions:

<p>Principal's Office</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the Dean regarding representation at the funeral and a letter of condolence.
<p>Dean of School</p> <p>(For SWBE, the Director of SWBE will assume responsibility for all such actions, for ALC this will be the GCU Academic Lead)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform staff and students as appropriate. • Inform Principal, DVC (Academic), staff and students of funeral arrangements. • Liaise with Principal's office regarding representation at the funeral and a letter of condolence. • Liaise with Academic Registrar regarding any Postumous Award. • Liaise with the Student Wellbeing Manager regarding on-going support from the Chaplaincy.
<p>Academic Registrar</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the School and other appropriate parties to ensure the information provided is accurate. • Ensure that all necessary internal people are informed and include a copy of the procedure.
<p>Head of Programmes and Planning</p> <p>(Fro GCUL this is the Head of Operations. For SWBE this is their Senior Administrator)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the School formally withdraws the student from their studies via the student withdrawal form, liasing with the Assitant Academic Registrar (Student Records & Assessments) • Check as to whether the student is on a programme with a placement element and inform the Placemetns Senior Officer
<p>Assistant Academic Registrar (Student Records & Assessment)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform: SAAS, SLC, UKVI as necessary (Liaising with Head of VISA as necessary) • Ensure student's 'College status' is updated to deceased and student withdrawn immediately. Details checked upon receipt of formal notification of withdrawal from School. • Remove Student's name from any exam listings • Ensure no pending results are released through automatic processes •
<p>Student Wellbeing Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Chaplaincy o Services/Accommodation o Library • Liaise with the Dean as necessary

PROCEDURE

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PROCEDURE

1.0 COMMUNICATION

1.1 Who should receive the information that a student has died

As soon as notification is received that a death occurred, whoever receives the information must immediately bring it to the attention of the Academic Registrar. Where appropriate the Academic Registrar will be responsible for verifying the accuracy of the notification. When a death has been confirmed the Academic Registrar will immediately notify:

- The Principal
- Deputy Vice-Chancellors
- University Secretary
- Chief Operating Officer
- Head of the VC's Office
- The Dean of School within the appropriate School or appropriate
- Assistant Academic Registrar – Student Records & Assessments
- The Head of Programmes and Planning within the appropriate School
- Director of Student Life
- Director of INTO GCU (Where appropriate)
- Student Welfare Manager
- Director of Communications & Public Affairs
- Secretary to Senate
- The Financial Controller
- The Head of Operational Services (Finance Office)
- UKVI, the student's award-making body and/or Student Loans Company, if appropriate (Student Records – Registry will notify these Bodies) – Assistant Academic Registrar – Student Records, liaising with Head of VISA as necessary
- Director of Information Services
- Head of Campus Services
- Director of GCU Foundation
- President of the Students Association
- Chief Executive of the Students Association

Head of Departments/Divisions must then complete and return the standard **Student Records – Notice of Withdrawal** form to Student Records (Registry). This form is available via the Registry SharePoint site.

1.2 What to do when a student has gone missing

Where a student is noticed to be missing in any circumstances where this gives rise to concern, the Principal should be informed immediately and it should be his/her responsibility to ensure contact with the Police. In the event of the Principal being beyond reach the DVC (Academic) will be responsible. The importance of the Principal and the Police being made aware of the situation cannot be over-emphasised.

Marketing & Communications must be made aware of the situation immediately. School staff should give all possible assistance to the University's officers involved in follow up activity.

1.3 The role of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)

It is intended that the prime co-ordinating function will be with the Dean of School. The DVC (Academic) will maintain an overview and will have the primary decision making function whenever any issues may arise. Any member of staff having or coming into possession of any relevant information should inform the DVC's office without delay: the DVC's office will then speedily relay such relevant information as it possesses to those who would benefit from having this information. Members of staff should use the utmost discretion at all stages in the communication of information.

1.4 The role of the Dean of School (or equivalent)

The role of the Dean of School is to co-ordinate activities within the School i.e. inform staff and students as appropriate; liaise with the DVC (Academic) regarding funeral arrangements and letter of condolence; the Academic Registrar in respect of a posthumous award.

1.5 The sharing of information

If at all possible and where appropriate all those immediately involved (or their representatives) should meet to share information, concerns, reactions and plans. This should have a benefit beyond the merely practical: all involved will have the opportunity at this meeting for personal contact with a view to ensuring effective and sensitive communication throughout.

1.6 The disclosure of information

In the case of a death by suicide a decision must be made regarding the disclosure of information. The family's wishes will be paramount.

1.7 The need for accurate information

In every case the greatest care should be taken to ensure that the information communicated is checked for its accuracy. Inaccuracy will cause distress and confusion and it is to be avoided.

1.8 Role of the Communications

The Director of Communications & Public Affairs should ensure that all staff who might be contacted by the press are briefed on how to handle inquiries. This includes reception staff and all staff who might be perceived by the press to be involved.

1.9 International Students

The death of an International student will **normally** lead to the appointment of the Director of Student Life as the Senior Coordinating Officer. In the absence of the Director of Student Life, the lead should be taken by the Student Wellbeing Manager

The Senior Coordinating Officer will refer to the established International Office procedures and will undertake responsibilities in relation to the following:

- Liaison with relevant consulate/embassy
- Visa arrangements for parents/travel
- Liaison with the family of the deceased over travel arrangements
- Funeral arrangements (if this is to be held in the UK)

- Ensuring that any cultural requirements are taken into account with reference to any funeral/memorial
- Assistance in any repatriation of the deceased
- Certification of the death
- Family liaison/notification
- Sourcing/Assistance with translation (List to be provided by International Office)
- Pastoral Support Course – fellow students/family members
- Police Liaison

1.10 Death of Recent Former Student

In the case of the death of a recent former student (within 2 years) Registry (Student Records), Alumni Office, The Director of Student Life and the Financial Controller should be informed.

2.0 ASSISTANCE TO BE GIVEN PRIOR TO OR IN CONNECTION WITH THE FUNERAL

2.1 Help for the student's family

The aim of all our dealings in the immediate aftermath of a student's death is to provide the best possible care for that student's family. Every conceivable kind of help which is within our reasonable power to provide should be offered to the family. Normally, the Chaplain(s) will have the necessary expertise to assist and provide guidance regarding funeral arrangements. If the family/student is part of a denomination/religion not represented on the Chaplaincy team, the Chaplain(s) should nevertheless be in a position to facilitate the meeting of the family with a suitable person who will conduct a funeral in accordance with the family's wishes.

2.2 The role of the Chaplaincy

Where the student's family lives within reasonable travelling distance the appropriate University Chaplain may wish to visit. If the family has to travel to Glasgow, the Chaplain might meet them and help to co-ordinate arrangements. This in no way precludes the involvement of other members of staff. It is a reflection simply of the fact that the University Chaplaincy is likely to be best qualified to assist grieving relatives, to liaise and make practical arrangements for the funeral, etc, and who may reasonably be expected to have good local knowledge. It is important that a member of the senior management team is involved with the family – this will indicate the University's concern for the family.

2.3 Identification of the deceased

At this stage, depending on how the student died, a formal identification of the deceased may be required. If circumstances prevent the family doing this (as may happen in the case of the death of an overseas student) the fullest possible consideration (given the limitations of time) should be given to who may assist in this task with the least distress. Where a member of the family identifies the deceased, support in the form of accompaniment may be offered, but the family's privacy and possible desire to do this alone should naturally be respected.

2.4 Dealing with the student's belongings

At an early stage thought will need to be given to the student's belongings if the student lived outwith the family home. So far as possible, the belongings should be left as they are. If the student lived in a Hall of Residence, a simple tidying of the room may be appropriate (provided the advice of the Police, if involved, has been sought). If in private rented accommodation then the matter should be left with the family and the landlord/landlady.

2.5 Continuing support for the family

Support and involvement with the family from the Chaplaincy/University should continue for whatever length of time and in whatever way is appropriate to the circumstances.

2.6 Attending the funeral

While it may not be possible for arrangements to be made for everyone to attend the funeral, it would be appropriate to cancel lectures, classes or seminars, which the deceased would have been attending, taking place at a time coinciding with the time of the funeral. This would be viewed as a mark of respect and enable fellow students and staff to attend the service.

The cost of sending flowers and of hiring a bus to transport people to the funeral should be borne by the student's School/Department

2.7 University representation at the funeral

At the funeral, the University should be represented by whichever members of staff choose to attend, but normally by the Chaplain, the Principal or Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) and the Dean of School.

3.0 INFORMING THE STUDENTS ABOUT THE DEATH

3.1 Who should be informed

Members of staff will acknowledge a responsibility to care for the students and for others involved. Several groups of students, perhaps overlapping, may be involved:

- i. Personal friends of the student
- ii. Other students on the same programme attending the same tutorial or seminar groups
- iii. Students who shared private rented accommodation with the deceased student
- iv. Students who reside in the Halls of Residence where the deceased lived

3.2 Who should tell the students about the death

Some students may already know of the student's death and the matter of student support is dealt with below. The question arises how and to whom should the news of the student's death be broken and by whom should this be done. A straightforward answer to the question of who should be told is whoever knew the student. Generally it would be reasonable to tell the student's year group at a lecture and seminar or tutorial group at an ordinary meeting of such a group. The question is more complicated where no recognisable group(s) exist and it might be best to leave the decision of who should be informed to the relevant programme organisers or personal/year tutor.

Who should tell the students is another matter. If academic staff who know their students feel able to do this, they are doubtless the most suitable people. If academic staff do not feel able, a member of student support staff or the Chaplain could be asked to do this. In some cases members of staff may themselves be grieving and it may be insensitive to expect them, in every case, to cope with this responsibility.

3.3 Students in private rented accommodation

Where the deceased student lived in private rented accommodation (or University accommodation) there may be flatmates to tell. Again this may be best done by those who know the student concerned.

3.4 Students in Halls of Residence

Where the student lived in University accommodation or Halls of Residence then either the manager of the Halls of Residence, or the Principal (or PVC Learning & Student Experience) may be charged with the task of breaking the news to a large group of students.

4.0 COPING WITH REACTIONS

4.1 The role of Campus Life Services

The availability of help for students and staff who find it very difficult to cope with the news of the death of a student is paramount and this may be most effectively offered by staff already within the University, namely the student support staff and the Chaplaincy. However, it should be recognised that the student support staff may themselves be distressed by events (as will other members of staff).

4.2 The difficulty in predicting reactions

It is difficult to predict how students and staff will react to the death of a student. Most students are young and the death of a young person is always very difficult to handle, especially if the death is sudden or unexpected and most particularly if a suicide has taken place. People may not react in the way they or we might imagine and they may not react till a length of time has passed. Having to deal with death causes stress as well as grief and students and staff may well already be under great stress when the death occurs. The need to do everything with courtesy, dignity and respect for everyone else's feelings cannot be over-emphasised.

4.3 Mutual support between colleagues

Normally in the event of an isolated death, even by suicide it would not be necessary to call upon the assistance of external helpers as it is likely that academic staff and Chaplains would have a mutual support network among their colleagues. However, should there be an incident involving MULTIPLE deaths then it may be desirable to call in external personnel to help. This should be done when a specific need is identified by the Chaplain and the Chief Operating Officer.

An external phone line Counselling Service is available and details should be provided to those who may require to access this service.

4.4 The possibility of related issues

What may happen following a death is that the exposure of emotions may cause other issues affecting the students to surface. Staff should be aware of this possibility and that such reactions may occur long after the events in question.

5.0 AFTER THE FUNERAL

5.1 Posthumous awards

After the funeral service has taken place, certain matters may need to be looked into. Consideration should be given to whether or not a deceased student may be awarded his or her diploma or degree posthumously. If it is decided to make an award to a student posthumously, then the student's family and the Academic Registrar should be informed of the decision as soon as possible by the Dean of School. The Family should be invited to consider, along with the Academic Registrar, how this award should be conferred.

Three options are possible:

- i. The award could be made by post
- ii. The award could be made at a small private ceremony or meeting of family with staff concerned
- iii. The award could be at the next appropriate Graduation and Awards Ceremony where the student's name could be read out in the normal way, followed by a brief statement of the posthumous nature of the award

5.2 The question of the recovery of University property in the possession of a deceased student

An issue may arise if the student died in possession of University property, such as library books or technical equipment. Under no circumstances should the family be asked before the funeral to return these. After a suitable lapse of time, an appropriate member of staff known to the family might mention any such items and offer to collect them from the family home or other suitable place.

5.3 Dealings with external agencies

The University authorities should make known to parents their willingness to deal with matters such as Students Awards Agency for Scotland, Student Loans Company or local authority grants awarding body whenever it is feasible and reasonable for the University to do this.

6.0 DEBRIEFING

6.1 Debriefing of staff involved

Where appropriate, and probably in the week following the funeral service, the PVC Learning and Teaching may ask all involved members of the University Staff to gather for a “debriefing” session. Where a student has died of natural causes this meeting might be seen as bringing some kind of formal “ending” to proceedings (although contact might continue with the family). Where the death has been by suicide, this meeting might serve as an opportunity to consider any lessons emerging from the tragic circumstances. While there is no place for apportioning blame it is hoped that a careful consideration of what has occurred may reveal lessons to be heeded in the future and which may be incorporated into these procedures.

Appendix 1 -

Any staff member being informed of the death of a student/ International student

Communications
Handle any press enquiries

Inform

Academic Registrar

Principal
Deputy Vice-Chancellors
University Secretary
Chief Operating Officer
Head of the VC's Office
Dean of School
Director of Student Life
Student Wellbeing Manager
Director of Communications & Public Affairs
Director of INTO (where applicable)
Director of GCU Foundation
Registry
Finance Office
Secretary to Senate
Director of Information Services
Head of Campus Services
President of the Students Association
Chief Executive of the Students Association

Student Wellbeing Manager to inform:

Chaplaincy
Services/Accommodation
Library
Liaise with Dean

Assistant Academic Registrar (Student Records & Assessments) to:

Inform: SAAS, SLC, UKM as necessary (Liaising with Head of VISA as necessary)

Ensure student's 'College status' is updated to deceased and student withdrawn immediately. Details checked upon receipt of formal notification of withdrawal from School.

Remove Student's name from any exam listings

Ensure no pending results are released through automatic processes

DVC (Academic) to call debriefing meeting if required

The Dean of School

Dean of School or Depute to inform: Staff and students as appropriate

Liaise with the Director of Student Experience and/or Student Wellbeing Manager

Dean of School or Depute to inform: Principal, DVC (Academic), staff and students of funeral arrangements

Dean of School or Depute to liaise with Principal regarding representation at funeral and letter of condolence

Dean of School or Depute to liaise with Director of Student Life regarding on-going support from Chaplaincy if needed

Dean of School or Depute to liaise with Academic Registrar regarding possible posthumous award