

Procedures

Student death or serious injury of a student

PROCEDURES

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Procedure

To ensure that the University responds professionally and appropriately to the death or serious injury of a student.

1.2 Scope

All staff and students of the University

1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The Deputy Registrar (Student Services) coordinates the internal communication and responses to the situation.

The Director of Safety and Security Services coordinates liaison with the emergency services.

2. PROCEDURE

2.1 Death or injury on University Premises

2.1.2 Inform Security - A person discovering someone on the University Campus or its immediate vicinity, or in off-campus University accommodation, who is showing no signs of life or appears to be seriously injured should immediately contact the Security Office stating 'This is an emergency' and giving a name, phone extension/mobile number and exact location.

If the person making the discovery has already contacted the emergency services he or she should notify the Security Office immediately afterwards. This is vital, as Security will need to direct the emergency services, attend the scene of the incident, and coordinate the University response.

2.1.2 Secure the area - He or she should remain at the scene and not remove anything or allow others to do so until the emergency services arrive. If able/trained, the person should administer appropriate First Aid.

2.1.3 Do not contact friends/family - In the event of a student death or serious injury, the Police must make first contact with the family. After this initial contact the Director of Student Wellbeing will contact the family and will liaise with the Academic School to co-ordinate other activities such as communication with fellow students.

2.1.4 The Security Office staff will:

- Notify and liaise with the emergency services
- Notify the Deputy Registrar (Student Services)
- Notify the Director of Safety and Security Services
- Notify the Emergency Response Team member

2.1.5 The Police and Ambulance Service will:

- Attend the scene of the incident
- Notify the next of kin/family

2.2 Death or injury not on University Premises

2.2.1 Inform Security - A person hearing of the death or serious injury of a student, including the Global Campus or study abroad student, should immediately contact the Security Office on

2.2.2 Once death or serious injury has been confirmed the Security Office will:

- Update the Deputy Registrar (Student Services) and Director of Safety and Security Services
- Check that the individual is a registered student on the Student Record System (via FSS)
- Check whether the individual is resident in University accommodation (via Room Allocation System)

2.2.3 The Deputy Registrar (Student Services) will, as soon as possible, notify the following via a signed memorandum:

- Secretary of the University (who will inform the Principal and Vice Chancellor)
- Head of School
- Head of the student's Academic Department
- Academic Registrar
- Director of Marketing & Communications
- University Health Centre
- University Chaplain
- Director of Human Resources
- Students' Union President

If resident on campus:

- Head of Hospitality Services
- Senior Warden

If the individual was an international or EU student and/or the death occurred while on placement or study abroad outside the UK, notify:

- Manager, Global Student Office

2.3. Response arrangements

2.3.1 The Deputy Registrar (Student Services) will then coordinate the University's response to the situation including:

- Coordinating internal and external communication
- Coordinating support for affected students and staff
- Liaison with the student's family and friends
- Establishing a key contact for external and internal enquiries.
- Updating University records and resolving outstanding academic and financial issues
- Liaising with Chaplaincy, family, staff and friends about funeral arrangements.
- Conducting a review of the incident and the University's response

3. Guidance for responding to the death or serious injury of a student

3.1 The Deputy Registrar (Student Services) has the lead role in ensuring the following:

- Family contact – When Police or hospital staff have informed family/friends establish a point of contact with them. Offer condolences and support with finding local accommodation, liaison with University departments, local emergency services, Foreign and British Embassies, Procurator Fiscal's Office etc.
- Notification – Once details are clearly understood the University Chaplain shall prepare notification for publication on relevant information boards
- Clear holding message - Ensure staff on the frontline who are likely to be asked for information about the situation have a clear holding message which is regularly updated, including information about available support and how to respond to press enquiries
- Ensure staff do not post on social media
- Update records - In the event of death, ensure details are amended on all databases via relevant Heads of Academic Department, Registry, Finance, Payroll, Human Resources, Oriam, Library, Accommodation Office, Medical and Dental Centres, Students' Union, Careers and Alumni to avoid inappropriate mailings and ensure the student's computer account is locked, retained for three years, and then deleted
- Establish key contact - Identifying Deputy Registrar (Student Services) and/or a Member of the Department as key contacts for external parties, such as family, hospital, Police, Procurator Fiscals Office etc. and Foreign and British Embassies.
- Facilitate Communication
 - Ensure details of support available are sent to all students affected bearing in mind that with social media students will find out very quickly about such incidents.
 - Email all stakeholders with regular updates confirming what has taken place, what actions are being taken and by whom.
 - Liaise with the Director of Marketing and Communications about press releases and announcements, liaising with Departments and friends to ensure they are appropriately personalised.
 - Draft letters of condolence to the family from the Principal and Vice-Chancellor and Head of Department.
 - Agree with the Head of Department how best to inform students and staff in their department, including the drafting of information and the offer of support through the Student Services, Students' Union and Department of Human Resources.
 - Provide feedback to the student's Head of Department about the probable cause of death or serious injury, where possible.

3.2 Student support

- Coordinate support and guidance for students within the University who may have been affected.
- Identify and offer support to other students, including those of the same nationality, who may have been close to the deceased or seriously injured student through their shared programme

of study, accommodation, clubs and societies, employment etc. with help from Registry, Accommodation Office and Students' Union.

- Provide information on bereavement and support agencies. Check for any other family ties or connections to the University.
- Check for possible links with other Edinburgh Institutions students through shared accommodation etc., and informing their support services.
- Advise students affected by the student death or serious injury to inform their academic departments, particularly if approaching examinations or other deadlines for assessed work and make them aware of the process for Mitigating Circumstances.
- Follow up with offers of support to those students most affected by the death or serious injury of the student, including the student(s) who found them.

3.3 Staff support

- Work with the Director of Human Resources to ensure coordination of subsequent support and guidance for students and staff within the University who may have been affected.
- Staff should contact their line manager and / or their Human Resources (HR) Manager for guidance, help and support and consider seeking support through the University's staff counselling and support services.

3.4 Subsequent coordination and support

- Liaise with the family, relevant Embassy and sponsors of international students, particularly in relation to their travel to the UK, immigration and other legal formalities, cultural needs and repatriation of the student.
- Seek advice on the cultural dimensions and implications of a student death and/or serious injury, perhaps from other students of the same nationality.
- Liaise with landlords and other contacts outside the University.
- Agree with the Secretary of the University and Academic Registrar and other relevant departments who will attend the funeral and other memorial events on behalf of the University, depending on wishes of family.
- Arrange coach travel for groups of students and staff wanting to attend the funeral, subject to the wishes of the family.
- Liaise with Chaplaincy, family, staff and friends about a memorial event at the University.
- Monitor and respond to issues raised through the Inquest.
- Review the circumstances of and University's response to the death or serious injury of a student to ensure the experience will inform the future development of this protocol.
- Two to three weeks after the event all staff and students directly involved should be contacted to check on their welfare, signpost to further support and ensure that any lessons learned are recorded and reviewed
- Two to three months after the event contact the family and offer posthumous award if relevant

Appendix 1

Information Sheet: Critical Incidents

This Information Sheet has been written in order to provide guidance and support for anyone who has been affected by a critical incident.

A critical incident can be defined as an event, usually sudden, which involves the experience of a level of significant distress that has the potential to overwhelm an individual or organisation. Typically, such events can include the witnessing, or direct exposure, to a threat or trauma which causes people to fear for their safety, or even their life. Thankfully, such events are extremely rare in the day to day lives of students, but this can also make it difficult for people to know how to react when either they, or a friend, have been involved in such a situation.

It is important to know that reactions to a critical incident vary from person to person in terms of type, strength and duration. Some of the more pronounced effects are not necessarily felt immediately after the event. Anyone involved has experienced a major, uninvited, disruption to their usual way of life and it may take some time before the world feels normal or safe again. **This is an entirely normal and natural part of the recovery process, and most people return to their usual way of being within one month.**

Some of the typical responses are listed below:

Emotional Reactions	Physical Reactions	Behavioural Reactions
Shock	Dizziness	Fight, flight and freeze responses
Numbness	Shaking	Tearfulness
Disbelief	Nausea	Black humour
Denial	Changes in breathing	Irritability
Anger	Loss of appetite	Bad dreams
Guilt	Tiredness	Flash-backs
Longing	Insomnia	Hyper-vigilance
Shame	Memory loss	Sensitivity
Fear or anxiety	Muscle tension	Aggression or apathy

It may be useful to share this information with friends and family, so that everyone knows what to expect or watch out for, and to allow time for those involved to make sense of all that has happened.

Some Do's and Don'ts

Don't: bottle up feelings

Do: express your emotions

Don't: avoid talking about what happened

Do: take opportunities to review the experience with yourself and others

Don't: let embarrassment stop you giving others as well as yourself the chance to talk

Do: take time out to sleep, rest, think, and be with close friends and family

Don't: expect the memories to go away: the feelings will stay with you for a considerable time

Do: express your needs clearly and honestly to friends, family, tutors, colleagues etc.

Do: try to keep your life as normal as possible after the experience

Do: be careful: accidents are more common after experiencing severe stress.

Additional Help

There can be a frustration and anger at having been exposed to a critical incident, but try to be patient about allowing yourself some time and space for recovery. Most people start to feel normal again within a month, but if this is not happening for you then it will be helpful to seek some extra support.

You may benefit from speaking about the incident with someone else:

- if you feel disturbed by intense feelings or body sensations that you can no longer tolerate
- if you think that your emotions are not falling into place, and that you feel very tense, confused, empty, or exhausted
- if after a month you continue to be numb and do not have appropriate feelings, or you have to keep active in order not to feel distressed
- if you continue to have nightmares and poor sleep
- if you have nobody with whom to share your feelings and you feel the need to do so
- if your relationships seem to be suffering, or sexual problems develop
- if you have accidents
- if you smoke, drink or take medication to excess since the event
- if your work performance suffers because you are unable to concentrate

Contacts and Resources

- The student counselling service: studentwellbeing@hw.ac.uk
<https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/edinburgh/counselling.htm>
- Carol Murray, Head of Student Counselling and Support C.J.Murray@hw.ac.uk
- Your Personal Tutor
- Your GP
- NHS website, www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/posttrauma.asp

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