



# Student and Staff Death Policy and Procedure

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## Purpose

1. It is rare that Northeastern University London (the University) is faced with the death of a student or staff member. However, it is essential that formal procedures are in place, which observe the following principles:
  - 1.1. An appropriate level of response by the University, with help from the appropriate external agencies.
  - 1.2. A sensitive and compassionate approach which recognises the distress for the person finding the body, the next of kin, and the distress or potential for distress for staff and students close to the deceased person.
  - 1.3. Clear lines of responsibility to support a set of coherent and valuable contributions, in response to the death, made by University staff and students.
  - 1.4. The observation of legalities to protect the interests of the University in cases where negligence might be alleged.
  - 1.5. An appropriate duty of care towards all students and staff.

## Scope

2. This Policy provides a high-level overview of the responsibilities and actions required by a range of stakeholders to respond to deaths of students and/or staff. It therefore focuses on a broad range of responses undertaken at the central and faculty level.

## Communications

3. The University is committed to responding to the death in a compassionate and respectful manner. The University will be guided by the following principles when responding to such incidents:
  - 3.1. The University will act in a timely and sensitive manner with respect and compassion. Care will be extended to those closely involved with the individual or the incident leading to the death, including the family or next of kin, friends, fellow students and staff members.
  - 3.2. The University will seek to collaborate and cooperate with external officials to facilitate any investigations or administrative activities relating to the death.

- 3.3. The University will act discreetly when dealing with information relating to the individual and the incident. Any public statements made for or on behalf of the University will only be released from the Director of Marketing, Admissions, Recruitment and Visas (DoMARV) after they have been checked for accuracy and approved by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). Any staff involved in responding to the incident will use discretion at all times.
- 3.4. All staff should ensure that they do not undertake any external communications, outside of those with emergency services, unless this is sanctioned by the CEO. Staff should continue to strictly observe the same protocols of data protection as set out under the General Data Protection Regulation. Staff should be careful of the language used when communicating with others. The term 'suicide' should never be used as this classification of death can only be used after it has been ruled as such by a Coroner. It can also be incredibly upsetting for family members.
- 3.5. All staff and students should ensure that they do not post any information on social media about the death.

## Procedure for Responding to a Suspected Death on University Property

4. The first member of staff (Primary Lead (PL)) to become aware of the incident should quickly co-opt appropriate people to implement the procedure.
5. The PL should:
  - 5.1. Call the emergency services by dialling 999 (if this has not already happened) and follow the 'Operator's' instructions.
  - 5.2. Stay on the phone as long as required.
  - 5.3. Close off the area so that it is not visible to others.
  - 5.4. Follow the 'Guidelines for the Primary Lead (Student and Staff Death Policy)' [Appendix A](#).
6. Once the emergency services are on the scene, the PL should continue to act as the University's liaison until directed otherwise by the DoMARV, Registrar or other member of SMT present at the scene.
7. The **emergency services** will then take charge of the situation. They will:
  - 7.1. Confirm the outcome, whether death or injury and will guide on the next steps.

- 7.2. Arrange for the removal of the deceased and any necessary post-mortem.
- 7.3. Arrange for the next of kin to be informed. The SMT member will source the details of a student's or staff member's next of kin. No person should contact relatives or friends of the deceased.

## **The Role of the Director of Marketing, Admissions, Recruitment and Visas (SMT Member)**

8. The role of the DoM is to:
  - 8.1. Be responsible for all internal and external communications.
  - 8.2. Explain the need to respect the privacy of the family, who should only be informed by the appropriate authorities. For this reason, students should not post any information on social media, such as the assumed cause of death.
  - 8.3. Monitor social media and any mentions of the death incident in the press.

## **The Role of the Registrar (SMT Member)**

9. The role of the Registrar is to:
  - 9.1. Liaise with the PL (and/or the member of SMT at the scene) and be the liaison contact point for the next of kin for students and police.
  - 9.2. Inform the DoMARV (unless they are already aware).
  - 9.3. Inform all other relevant members of the University at the earliest opportunity, normally within 24 hours (unless they are already aware).
  - 9.4. Ensure Public Health England is notified, if the cause of death was related to an infectious disease.
  - 9.5. Liaise with the Head of Student Support and Development (HSSD).

## **The Role of the Director of Resourcing and Operations (SMT Member)**

10. The role of the Director of Resourcing and Operations (DoRO) is to:
  - 10.1. Liaise with the PL (and/or the member of SMT at the scene) and be the liaison contact point for the next of kin for staff and police.
  - 10.2. Inform the DoMARV (unless they are already aware).

- 10.3. Inform all other relevant members of the University at the earliest opportunity, normally within 24 hours (unless they are already aware).
- 10.4. Ensure Public Health England is notified, if the cause of death was related to an infectious disease.
- 10.5. Liaise with the HSSD if appropriate.
- 10.6. Inform any staff affected of the support offered by the University.
- 10.7. Reach out to staff who were directly involved in the incident to offer one-to-one appointments and inform them all the support available.

## The Role of Student Support and Development

11. The role of Student Support and Development (SSD) is to:
  - 11.1. Ensure the students involved are escorted to a safe place and make a full list of all student details for those present at the scene.
  - 11.2. Inform any students affected of the support offered by the University.
  - 11.3. Reach out to those students who were directly involved in the incident to offer one-to-one appointments and inform them of the support available.

## Deaths Not On University Property

### Third Party Informing the University of the Death of a Student

12. To inform the University of the death of a student that has not occurred on University property, the Registrar, or the CEO in their absence, must be called during office hours (020 7637 4550), at the earliest opportunity.
13. The Registrar (or the CEO) should:
  - 13.1. Liaise with the person who has reported the death.
  - 13.2. Inform the DoMARV who will organise the communications.
  - 13.3. Inform and brief the HSSD, or in their absence another member of SSD, who can organise and brief the rest of SSD and Registry so that they can provide the necessary support for students if any were at the scene; and/or the DoRO who can organise support for staff.

13.4. Inform all relevant members of the University at the earliest opportunity, normally within 24 hours.

13.5. Be the point of contact for the next of kin.

## Third Party Informing the University of the Death of a Member of Staff

14. To inform the University of the death of a member of staff that has not occurred on University property, the DoRO, or the CEO in their absence, must be called during office hours (020 7637 4550), at the earliest opportunity.

15. The DoRO (or the CEO) should:

15.1. Liaise with the person who has reported the death.

15.2. Inform the DoMARV who will organise the communications.

15.3. Inform all relevant members of the University at the earliest opportunity, normally within 24 hours.

15.4. Be a point of contact for the next of kin and/or the person managing the staff member's estate.

15.5. Inform the insurance company to instigate the 'Death in Service' policy and organise for any payments to be made.

## Deaths On or Off University Property

### Following the Death of a Student

16. After the event involving a student death the Registrar (or nominee) will:

16.1. Notify the Director of Finance to ensure no fee notes or other financial communications are sent to the deceased.

16.2. Ensure that the relevant external organisations are notified e.g., Senate House Library.

16.3. Liaise with the Head of Visa and Compliance if the deceased was on a Student Visa

16.4. Coordinate the closure of the records of the deceased with Registry.

16.5. Contact the student's emergency contact after the death has been confirmed by the authorities and the family have been informed. This call will focus on offering the University's condolences and extending support. If the next of kin wishes to make the details of the funeral service available, arrange for

contact details to be made available to those who the next of kin have agreed can attend.

16.6. The University will not send flowers or make any charitable donation without the consent of the emergency contact .

16.7. Arrange for a commemorative event to be held in University if this is deemed appropriate.

16.8. Arrange a date for the collection of personal belongings, if appropriate.

## Following the Death of a Member of Staff

17. After the event involving the death of a member of staff the DoRO (or nominee) will:

17.1. Organise the closure of the records of the deceased.

17.2. Contact the emergency contact after the death has been confirmed by the authorities and the next of kin have been informed. This call will focus on offering the University's condolences and extending support. If the next of kin wish to make the details of the funeral service available, arrange for contact details to be made available to those who the next of kin have agreed can attend.

17.3. The University will not send flowers or make any charitable donation without the consent of the next of kin.

17.4. Arrange for a commemorative event to be held in University if this is deemed appropriate.

17.5. Arrange a date for the collection of personal belongings, if appropriate.

## Version History

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## Appendix A: Guidelines for the Primary Lead

The first member of staff (Primary Lead (PL)) to become aware of the incident should quickly co-opt appropriate people (Team) to implement the procedure.

1. The PL should:
  - 1.1. Call the emergency services by dialling 999 (if this has not already happened) and follow the 'Operator's' instructions.
  - 1.2. Stay on the phone as long as required.
  - 1.3. Close off the area so that it is not visible to others.
2. The Primary Lead should instruct a member of the Team to:
  - 2.1. Ensure that, unless first aid is being administered, the person or any object connected with the scene is not touched or moved as the area could be classed as a crime scene.
  - 2.2. Station themselves outside the building's main entrance to direct the emergency services as they arrive.
  - 2.3. Ensure only necessary individuals remain at the scene (e.g. the Team, the individual who discovered the person and any witnesses). It might be necessary for those individuals to be removed to a place of safety.
  - 2.4. Evacuate the building, in a calm manner so as not to panic any students or staff and ensure they are at a place of safety separate from those in the above paragraph.
  - 2.5. Inform the Director of Marketing, Admissions, Recruitment and Visas (DoMARV) (during office hours) or in the absence of the DoMARV another member of the Senior Management Team.
  - 2.6. Inform the Registrar (during office hours) or in the absence of the Registrar another member of the SMT.
  - 2.7. Notify the Head of Student Support and Development or in their absence another member of the Student Support and Development so they can organise support to students at the scene, and/or the DRO for staff requiring support.
  - 2.8. Assign a room for possible police interviews.